

Collegiate Dressage: How To Ride Your Best Test Yet

Dressage

TODAY

December 2015

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WITH SCOTT HASSLER

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TRAINERS AT
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**Inside
Charlotte Dujardin's
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**You Asked, We Answered:
RIDING EXERCISES
FOR SMALL
SPACES, P. 72**

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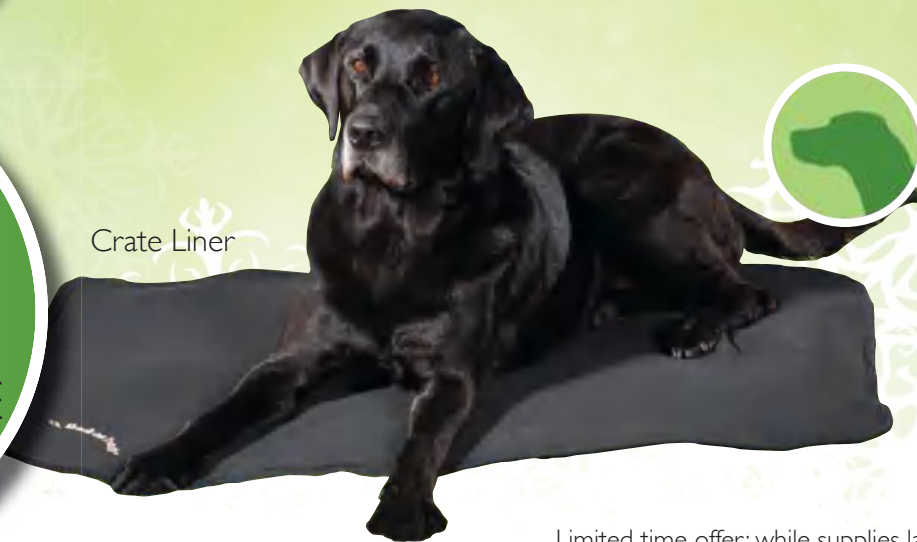


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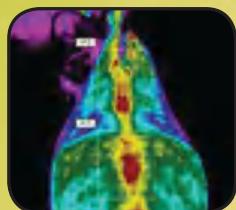


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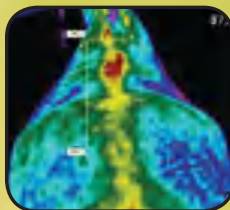
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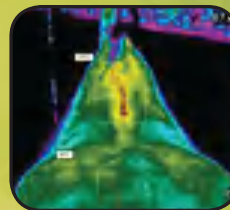
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Jessica von Bredow-Werndl
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Learn By Levels Key These icons will help you identify level-appropriate exercises for you and your horse ...

INTRO Intro Level

TR Training Level

1st First Level

2nd Second Level

3rd Third Level

4th Fourth Level

FEI FEI Level

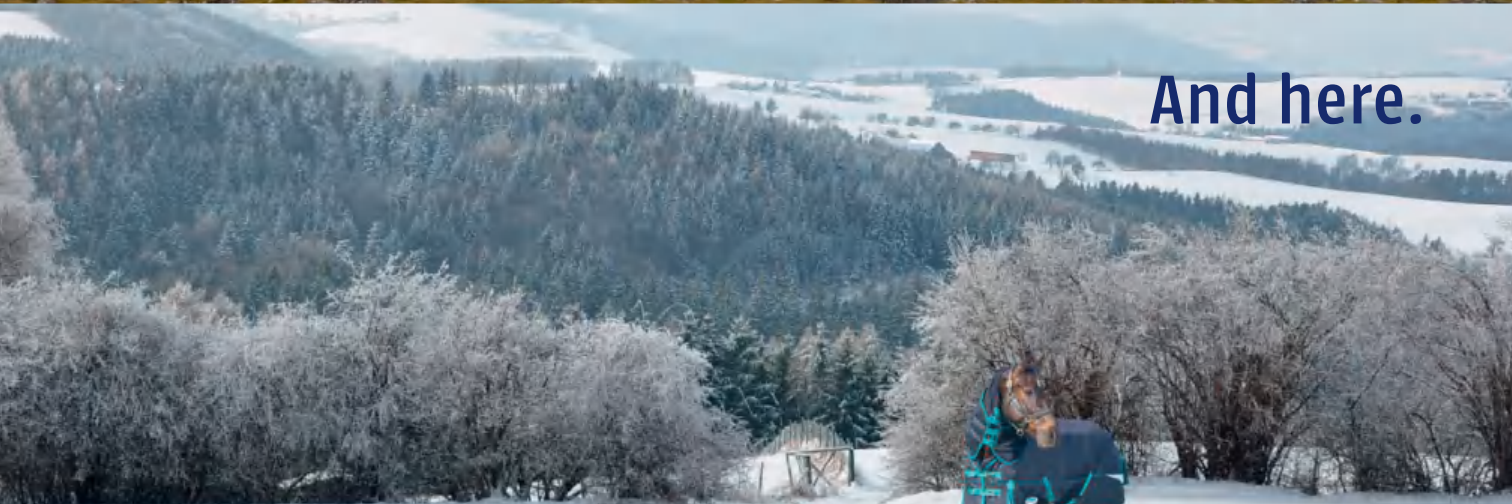
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- ▶ “Viewpoints From C”—follow USEF senior dressage judge and FEI-level competitor Margaret Freeman on her dressage journeys.
- ▶ “Remember to Smile”—follow the story of Pam Stone and her new horse.
- ▶ U.S. Olympian Adrienne Lyle—check out news and tips from this top Grand Prix competitor.

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Are You a Good Coach?

I've had several riding instructors since I began riding some 30 years ago. Some knew my strengths and weaknesses and how to help me work with each. The really good ones (of which there were a few) knew how to take my strengths and motivate me to do better. Of course, there were some who took my weaknesses and only made them worse. Fortunately, I had sense enough not to stay with those instructors.

Memories of my good (and not so good) instructors came to me as I read this month's training article, "Coach Your Horse for Success," by esteemed trainer and former USEF National Young Horse Dressage Coach Scott Hassler. In this article,

Hassler tells us that an ideal coaching style combines skills such as how to motivate the horse with beauty and tact. He says, "The riders I respect most ... don't falsely build their horses up, and their horses never feel defeated. When a good coach addresses an issue, the horse receives the correction by thinking, *Yes, I'll try harder for you! Got it!* It's a beautiful dialog because of the coaching style."

You can read the full story on p. 40.



Another sign of a good coach is a rider who can get on any horse and ride him to the best of his ability in any

situation. British Olympian Charlotte Dujardin proved this during her master class at the Rolex Central Park Horse Show in New York City this September. Since Valegro, her World Champion mount, couldn't make the trip from England, Dujardin borrowed Canadian Olympian Evi Strasser's horse, Renaissance Tyme. Only upon her arrival in New York, did Dujardin have the chance to ride the horse. So it took some good coaching for her to ride the Oldenburg gelding successfully. In her master class she told the audience that it's important to work with the horse, not against him. "If he's afraid of something, I can reassure him and be positive and say 'it's OK,' and then he trusts me and carries on, rather than being afraid," she said. Read "Dressage in The Big Apple" on p. 48.

This month we also bring you a story about collegiate riding and the Intercollegiate Dressage Association (IDA). Did you know that riders who participate in the IDA (and other collegiate riding teams) must compete on horses who they have never ridden before? If they're lucky, they have about 10 minutes to warm up before entering the ring. Talk about learning to be a good coach for your horse! Read more on how these young riders learn to make the most out of each test they ride in "Catching a Ride" on p. 60.

I hope you find these articles (and the rest) beneficial in your journey to be the best coach for your horse.

Until next time,

Jennifer Mellace, Editor
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Many Thanks

The Dressage Owners Task Force (DOTF) was excited and pleased to read “Building High Performance Teams” in the June 2015 issue of *Dressage Today*. Amber Heintzberger did a brilliant job in describing the goals of the DOTF and *Dressage Today's* commitment to helping the DOTF reach a larger audience was stupendous. More bouquets to send: *Dressage Today's* layout was wonderful and the sidebars nicely complimented the text. Your support and focus on the work of the DOTF and our website, ExperienceDressage.com means so much to our efforts in building high

performance dressage teams who can medal in international shows.

We can all take heart in some recent developments. Through a new syndicate, Adrienne Lyle is now partnered with Sandronnerhall, a fabulous stallion. Rowan O'Reilly purchased Catherine Haddad-Staller's high performance horse, Hotmail. In the Emerging and Potential Star category, a new syndicate is forming to help Jennifer Marchand purchase a high performance horse. Jennifer was with Courtney King-Dye before the accident and is now ready to step into international dressage. These fine professionals were in need of a helping hand and now we have a system to offer them a path to their dreams and ours. Again, we are thrilled by your support.

Elizabeth Meyer, DOTF Committee Member



Correction

In the “Florida Dream Tour” article published in June, Yeguada de Ymas in Wellington, Florida, was listed as being owned by Juan Matute. This is not correct. It is owned by Cristina Danguillecourt and Javier Bacariza, as is the farm, Elemis Ranch, included on the tour. 🐾

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DRESSAGE TWEET OF THE MONTH

“Through the horse’s mind is the best way to his body.”

— Scott Hassler

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Dressage Abbreviations

A guide to the most commonly used abbreviations in <i>Dressage Today</i> :		GMO	Group Member Organization
		USDF	United States Dressage Federation
FEI	Fédération Equestre Internationale	USEF	United States Equestrian Federation

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Margaret's Blog



Courtesy, Margaret Freeman

Keept the diagonal holy." That was great advice given to me by a friend years ago. He meant to venerate the diagonal, of course, not that it might have been infiltrated by groundhogs, as in "holey." And he was just talking about the free walk on the diagonal. What my friend meant was to always walk across the diagonal in the ring at home with a sense of purpose, with a swinging, energetic stride. If I was just walking on a long rein in a resting phase, then I should change direction by turning directly across to the other side, such as from B to E, or through a half-circle. That way, when I got to the free walk or extended walk across the diagonal in an actual test situation, my horse would be looking for a long, loose marching stride without my even having to ask for it. 🐾

Follow more of USEF senior dressage judge Margaret Freeman's blog at dressagetoday.com



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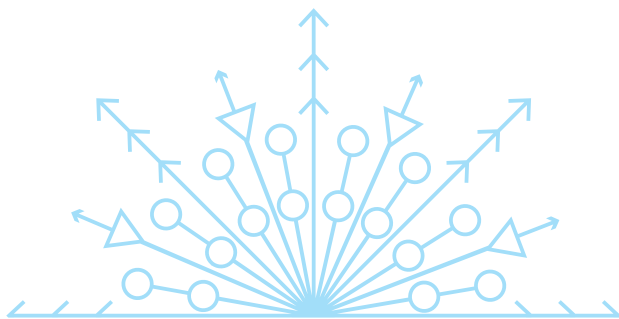
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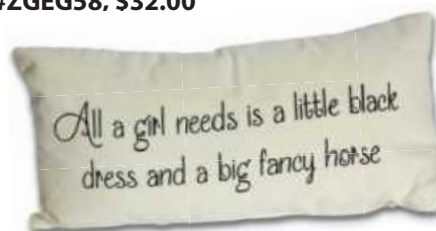
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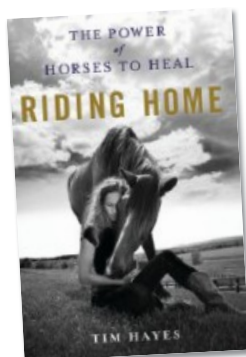
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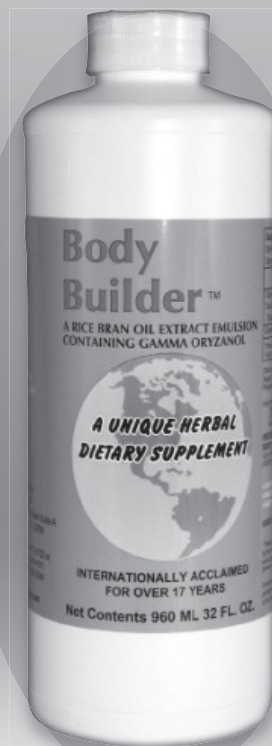
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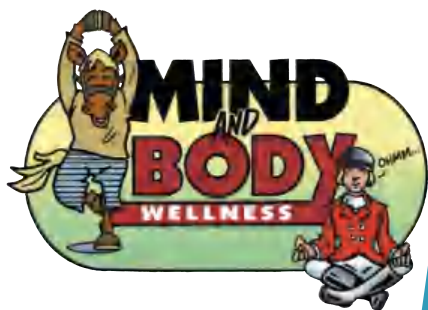
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THE BALANCED JOURNEY

By Jenny Susser, PhD

Clichés are funny. They sound ridiculous, yet we use them all the time. “Life is a journey not a destination” is one of my favorites to hate. You see it everywhere on social media now, but I remember it used to be on T-shirts and in card shops or especially on those calendars we had on our desks that had a new affirmation every day. You will have to be older than the Internet to understand that reference, though. In a conversation, we say clichés at the perfect time and then everyone gives a pause with a slight head tilt as they mumble, “Hmm, so true,” and then immediately return to post-cliché behavior without a second thought, which is the unfortunate definition of a cliché.

As the year winds to an end, we tend to become more reflective. This natural state is a powerful one in which to take advantage and cultivate change. However, many of us return to normal (or post-cliché) behavior by the time mid-January arrives and the call of our busy lives and long to-do lists take back over the majority of the real estate in our minds. Insight-oriented work is the foundation for personal change, and yet many people never make it past this stage. There are a few reasons for this wonderful phenomenon and perhaps having insight into them can help you turn insight into action—for it is only in action that change occurs.

The first reason we fail to turn insight into action is discomfort. Any living being hates discomfort and from a survival standpoint, we avoid this state at all costs. We do it so quickly and naturally, we don’t even notice. Our horses do it, too. Your wiggly, clever horse is simply being an instinct-driven animal, seeking relief from the discomfort of your physical pressure as a rider.

Emotional discomfort for people is the worst. Many can withstand physical discomfort, but emotional discomfort is tough and takes some tolerance. But when

we wiggle our way out of the discomfort, we actually cheat ourselves out of the opportunity to examine, reflect and connect to insights. Developing a capacity for the discomfort is a worthy and valuable part of the journey.

The second roadblock is perspective. Let’s face it, most of us are not so good at gaining perspective. It takes time to develop the consideration of perspective as a reliable skill, and sometimes we forget how important it can be. The word “perspective” comes from the art world and it is how an artist portrays a three-dimensional object on a flat surface, such as a canvas, by suggesting depth. Think about that for a minute—making something flat look not-flat by adding color or shading or texture. Perspective is the way you see things, and we have the ability to add our own depth to a subject or person by adding metaphorical color or texture or shading.

If you start to look for other angles or depth in a conversation, subject or person, you will be able to find it. It is about asking questions instead of being certain you already know the answer. It will never fail to help you make decisions, connect deeper with people or concepts, and help you feel better. So put that on your to-do list for the new year.

The third sticky spot is performing the actual action. Insights need to be tied to a new action in order to create change. Interestingly, the hardest part is remembering to do the new action. It sounds ridiculous but this is true. We want to do things differently, but need to form new habits to make sure they get done. This is not done just through motivation, determination and willpower alone. You need support and reminders to get to success. One of the best parts of the technology revolution and having our cell phones attached to us at the hip is that they can help remind us of these things.

Leave nothing to chance by assigning a time to everything. Set reminders



Jenny Susser has a doctoral degree and is licensed in clinical health psychology, specializing in sport psychology. A four-year all-American swimmer at UCLA, she swam on two national teams and at the 1988 Olympic Trials. She has worked with athletes of all sports and ages—collegiate, professional, international and amateur. She was the sport psychologist for the 2010 WEG South African Para-Dressage Team and the 2012 U.S. Olympic Dressage Team. Dr. Jenny is also a performance coach with Human Performance.

on your phone to breathe or to think a positive thought or to create a goal for your ride today or to remember to be grateful for the wonder in your life.

Measuring physical progress is easy, but measuring mental and emotional gains is not as obvious. I see this stop people from trying, even when they are improving and making great progress. Look for the small, daily wins, practice gratitude, identify happy moments,

practice being kind for no reason. More clichés, I know, but like stereotypes, they exist for a reason. And there is actually a growing body of research to show these actions have great impact upon our physical and mental bodies. A small change is better than no change and tends to be more lasting anyway. I'll never forget the first time someone asked me, "How do you eat an elephant?" The answer is, "One bite at a time."

Thank you for joining me on this mental-wellness-column journey. Keep your journey balanced by mixing some kindness and compassion for yourself in there. We can get lost in the work and the focus on our goals, and that can ultimately send us off course. I hope this column was useful and that you will continue to practice and prepare for whatever you are aiming to accomplish. Best of luck. I will be rooting for you.

THE IMPORTANCE OF BETTER BREATHING

By Rebecca Ashton • Photos by Norma Ashton and Richard I'Anson

Breathing probably shouldn't need to be talked about. After all, we do it every moment of every day without thinking. What's there to know? Surely we're experts from all the practice! So why does it prove such a problem for riders?

When we are on horses, our bodies go into survival mode to a greater or lesser extent. We are on a big moving animal while, at the same time, our legs are taken away as we are connected to our horse by our seat bones. This is a very precarious situation for our body to be in and our brain is well aware of it.

Our bodies react to this situation by tightening up, our heart rate increases and our breathing becomes shallow. The snowball effect of shallow breathing is that less oxygen reaches our blood cells, fatiguing muscles and diminishing endurance while increasing anxiety and poor concentration. This all negatively affects our technique and ability to ride well. In this situation, we are likely to become more problem-focused than solution-focused.

We need good breathing to help keep an efficient interchange between oxygen and carbon dioxide in the cells of our body. A good exchange between oxygen and carbon dioxide helps to clear out toxins, which allows our muscles to work efficiently for longer. This is important in an endurance activity like riding. It means that muscles don't start to tighten and grip involuntarily, so we can continue to ride with balance rather than strength. Tension in our body eventually leads to muscle weakness, and both lead to decreased ability to communicate with our horse. Our body alignment and stability become compromised as well. Gripping limbs also inhibit our horse's breathing as we clamp onto his ribs with our legs. Shallow breathing can also affect posture. It can cause us to lift our shoulders rather than use the full capacity of our lungs, right down to the lower lobes. The lifting of our shoulders causes neck tension, restricting blood flow to the brain, and also hinders shoulder stability, which will lead to us to trying to hold our horse more with our arms, creating a blocked, hard hand.

Good deep breathing softens your body and also lowers the center of gravity back into your pelvis, both of which make you a much easier load for the horse to carry as you engage your core correctly and swing with the horse.

Horses are so sensitive that they can



Use of a resistance band



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perceive the slightest change in our body. Holding your breath will quicken your heart rate. We have three pulse points down our leg that are, therefore, close to the horse. Sometimes the horse is more aware of what's going on with our bodies than we are. Next time your horse gets tense, do a quick check of your body to make sure the problem isn't your tension.

When our breathing is effective, we will stay calmer under pressure, as when we compete. Good breathing, allowing good oxygen delivery to the brain, keeps us focused. It's much easier to remember your test in this state. It also means that your reaction time remains fast, so problems can be fixed quickly before they become a big deal. We will stay in the present moment better and in tune with our horse.

The best way to improve breathing is awareness. Be still and take a moment to focus on how you breathe, what areas tighten and how long it takes you to fully inhale and exhale. Try to breathe in and out through your nose, keeping your tongue gently touching the top of your palate. In more extreme exercise conditions, it can be beneficial to breathe in through the nose and out through the mouth, with the exhale taking place during the biggest-effort part of the exercise. This helps engage important core muscles.

An exercise to help with this is to breathe in through your nose and feel your lungs expanding in all directions, remembering that your lungs aren't just at the front of your body. Feel the sides of your body move outward as well as your back, with your shoulders remaining relaxed. Make sure you exhale fully so as not to experience chest tightness and hyperinflation. Wrapping a resistance band low around your rib cage as you breathe can give good feedback as to whether your lungs are working in an efficient way.

Remember, the rib cage is moved



The best way to improve breathing is awareness.

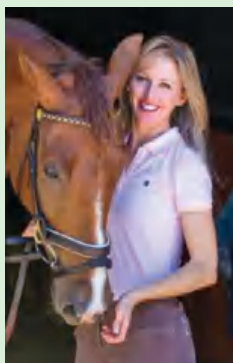
by muscles, too, so if deep breathing is new to you, the muscles need time to tone and work properly like any other muscle. The more practice you do, the better functioning the muscles will be. Belly breathing isn't so helpful in riding as we need to keep our core engaged to keep our pelvis stable. Focus instead on the lungs and the diaphragm.

When you are riding and you can feel yourself get short of breath, you can try breathing in time with your half halts. Breathe out as you half halt, and this will not only improve the effect of your aids and deepen your seat, but will get your body more relaxed, allowing you to hold your horse from your deep core muscles rather than your external global muscles.

Another trick is to do a breathing reset. Breathe in for a count of 3, 6 or 9, whichever is most comfortable, hold for the same number of counts, breathe out for the same count and hold for the same count. Do this three to five times and see how quickly your breath returns to

being deep and slow. This can be helpful at a show when you are dealing with the franticness of the warm-up arena or just before entering the competition arena. Off-the-horse work using such practices as Qigong, Tai Chi and Pilates can not only improve your breathing technique, but also your body awareness and control, as breath is integral to each of these exercise techniques.

Over the last 12 months, I have given you exercises that isolate specific riding muscles and test other aspects of your riding, such as balance and reaction, while helping to get you out of your comfort zone. This will not only improve your body awareness and control but also your mental focus. It may also help you understand what your horse experiences during his training sessions. After all, you are your horse's personal trainer. So take it easy on yourself and your equine partner, work smart and remember why we started this to begin with—to challenge ourselves and have fun! 🐾



Rebecca Ashton is a qualified Pilates instructor, a British Horse Society-trained instructor and an Equestrian Australia-accredited dressage coach. She has competed through Intermediaire II, working with riders such as Anky van Grunsven and earning championship titles in the small tour. She lives in Australia and teaches clinics internationally (equestelite.com).



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COLOR: Available in many colors
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Ariat Ideal Down Jacket & Vest

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VEST COLOR: Lagoon, Black, Chilli Pepper, Leopard
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Ariat Women's Extreme H2O Insulated Tall Boot

Waterproof and insulated with Thinsulate insulation to keep feet warm and dry.

**COLOR: Black WOMEN'S
SIZES: 5.5-11**
SALE \$239.95



Ariat Extreme Zip H2O Insulated Paddock
Waterproof, full grain leather upper and waterproof membrane construction, combined with Thinsulate insulation to keep feet warm and dry.

COLOR: Black

YOUTH SIZES: 11-5

MEN'S SIZES: 7-13

WOMEN'S SIZES: 5.5-11

starting at **SALE \$129.95**

Ariat Women's Extreme Lace H2O Insulated Paddock

Waterproof, full grain leather upper and waterproof membrane construction, combined with Thinsulate insulation to keep feet warm and dry.

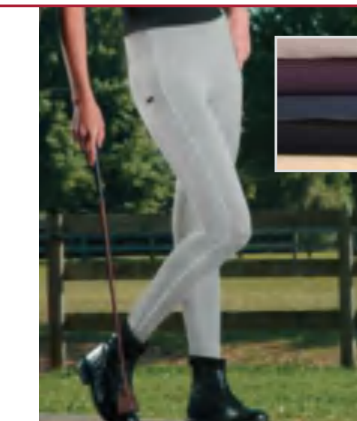
COLOR: Black

WOMEN'S SIZES: 5.5-11

SALE \$169.95




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Devon-Aire Signature Ladies Breeches

WOMEN'S SIZES: 26 - 36

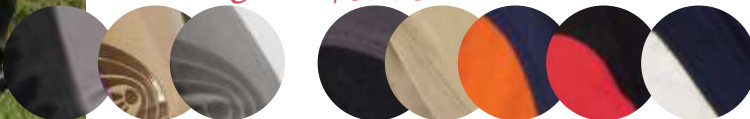
FULLSEAT COLOR: Black/Grey, Charcoal/Black, Taupe/Taupe, White/Grey

SALE \$109.95

WOMEN'S SIZES: 24 - 36

KNEE PATCH COLOR: Charcoal/Black, Beige/Beige, Beige/Brown, Navy/Orange, Black/Red, Black/Aqua, Black/Purple, Navy/Aqua, Navy/White

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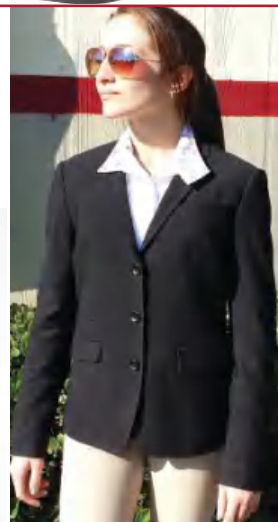
**Devon-Aire Ladies
Sensation Cell Phone
Pocket Tight**
**COLOR: Graphite, Merlot,
Dark Grey, Black, Beige**
WOMEN'S SIZES: XS-XL
SALE \$49.95



**Devon-Aire Signature
Granada Ladies Field Boot**
COLOR: Black

SIZES: 37-42 Reg. & Slim

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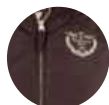
COLOR: Black or Navy
WOMEN'S SIZES:

2 - 18

SALE \$119.95



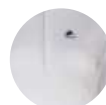
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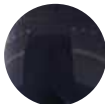
**Horze Crescendo
Carolina Padded Vest**
COLOR: Peacoat Dark
Blue, Midnight Green,
Dark Brown
SIZES: XXS-XL
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**Horze Supreme Zoe
Women's Lightweight
Jacket**
COLOR: Lapis Lazuli Blue/
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Black
SIZES: XXS-XL
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COLOR: Lapis Lazuli Blue,
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Pink/Black, Light Green/
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**B Vertigo Olivia Ladies
Full Seat Breeches**
COLOR: Dark Brown, Very
Dark Blue, Bright White
SIZES: 20 - 32
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**Horze Grand Prix
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Leather Kneepatch**
COLOR: Black, Dark Blue,
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Brown, Steel Grey, Turkish
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SIZES: 22-34 Reg & Long
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**B Vertigo Kimberley
Women's Self Seat Breech**
COLOR: Black
SIZES: 22-32
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Horze Supreme Avalanche Pro Winter Rug
1200D ripstop material with 300g lining.
Waterproof with taped seams, and breathable.
COLOR: Peacoat Dark Blue or Black
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COLOR: Light Brown
SIZES: X-Full, Full, Cob, Pony
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Developed for the dedicated rider on a budget. The latex/wool flocking eliminates lumps and bumps. Features the new QUIK-CHANGE Gullet System, changing the width of the tree is only four fasteners away!

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SIZES: 14, 15, 16.5, 17, 17.5, 18

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Ovation Palermo Saddle

Classic close contact saddle with added details for today's rider. Correct balance, proven fit, comfortable grippy covered leather with that "ready-to-ride" feel. Features the XCH Interchangeable Gullet System.

COLOR: Brown

SIZES: 15, 16, 16.5, 17, 17.5, 18 Medium Forward Flap

SIZES: 16.5, 17, 17.5, 18 Medium Flap

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Mountain Horse Venezia Field Boot

Zip-in Convenience Meets Athletic Performance. Exclusive Mountain Horse Prolaze-Flexnotch technology for a comfortable heels down position. Full grain leather. Lining: Pigskin napa.

COLOR: Black

SIZES: Ladies 6-11 Slim, Tall, Wide or Regular

SALE \$249.95



Ovation Rhona Country Boot

German-made. Waterproof/breathable membrane. Oiled leather foot, top cuff, and accent strips offer beautiful contrast to the butter soft suede uppers.

COLOR: Brown

SIZES: 36R-45R & 36 W-42 W

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Ovation Z-10 Soul Helmet

Make it your own with front and back engravable plates. Features leather brim and harness and adjustable dial-fit.

COLOR: Black or Brown

SIZES: S/MD or M/LG

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Pessoa 1200D Alpine Turnout Blanket
Waterproof-Breathable Turnout blanket features a 1200 Denier Teflon-coated Ballistic Weave outer shell, 300 gram insulation with a 3M moisture wicking quick dry lining. Patented Exceler closure system.

COLOR: Navy/Magenta, Navy/Hunter, Black/Clay Plaid, Navy/Black Plaid

SIZES: 60" - 87"

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COLOR: Brown, Black, Tan
Sizes: S, M, L

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COLOR: Brown
Sizes: S, M, L, XL

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Troxel Rebel
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Helmet
COLOR: Fleur De Lis,
Electric Blue Steer,
Atomic Yellow Steer,
Turquoise Rose, Pink
Rose, Star, Rocker,
Cross
Sizes: S, M, L

SALE \$54.95



Troxel Dakota
Maximum Vented All-Trails™
Helmet
COLOR: Trail Dust or
Grizzly Brown
Sizes: S, M, L

SALE \$54.95



Troxel Liberty
Low Profile Schooling
Helmet
COLOR: Ruby,
Pink Duratec, Gray
Duratec, Black
Duratec, Cobalt, Pearl,
Fuchsia, Black
Sizes: S, M, L

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Top Quality. Great Value.
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Perri's Twisted Leather Halter
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Sizes: Oversize, Horse, Cob
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10 COLOR COMBINATIONS!
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SALE \$69.95
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SALE \$79.95



Perri's Lycra Mane Hood
COLOR: Black, Hunter Green, Hot Pink, Lime Green, Navy, Purple, Royal Blue, Turquoise
Sizes: M, L, XL
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Perri's Leather Stable Halter
COLOR: Havana
Sizes: Horse, Cob
SALE \$69.95



Perri's Padded Leather Halter
20 COLOR COMBINATIONS!
Sizes: Oversize, Horse, Cob
SALE \$99.95



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Perri's Potion with purchase of Leather Padded Halter



Perri's Real Tree Saddle Pad
COLOR: Green or Pastel Pink
Sizes: All Purpose, Pony
SALE \$39.95
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Perri's Padded Leather Dog Collars
26 COLOR COMBINATIONS!
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Sizes: S, M, L, XL
SALE \$27.95



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COLOR: Green or Pastel Pink
Sizes: One Size
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Adjustable shoulder straps.

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Scottish inspired, argyle patterns retain their sophisticated, iconic style. For the preppy chic, available in 4 color combinations.

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Lettia Union Jack All Purpose Pad

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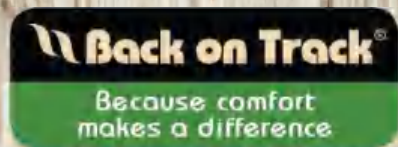
Lettia Union Jack Bamboo Boot Sock

SIZE: Adult or Child

SALE \$9.89

Lettia Union Jack Nylon/Spandex Boot Sock

SALE \$10.79



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Back On Track Mesh Sheet

Therapeutic sheet is a breathable mesh material with state-of-the-art fabric containing polyester thread embedded with a fine ceramic powder. Designed to reflect the horse's own body-warmth, it creates a soothing far infrared thermal warmth, which can help alleviate pain associated with inflamed muscles and joints.

COLOR: Black

SIZES: 60 - 90

SALE \$269



Back On Track Exercise Sheet

Excellent for use during warm-up sessions, riding tours as well as following exercise / competition sessions.

COLOR: Black SIZES: 72 - 84

SALE \$139



Back On Track Fleece Blanket

Made with a beautiful fleece material infused with state-of-the-art fine ceramic powder that is designed to reflect the horse's own body-warmth, creating a soothing far infrared thermal warmth, which can help alleviate pain associated with inflamed muscles and joints.

COLOR: Black SIZES: 66 - 90

SALE \$259

Back On Track Gloves

Arthritis in the hand? Maybe this is your answer! They have helped many people with pain in their hands (such as rheumatoid arthritis), as well as sufferers of extremely poor circulation in their fingers.

COLOR: Black SIZES: XS, S, M, L, XL

SALE \$30



Back On Track Hock Boots

Creates a soothing far infrared thermal warmth, which can help alleviate pain associated with inflamed muscles, ligaments, tendons and joints.

Sold in Pairs.

COLOR: Black SIZES: S, M, L

SALE \$93



Back On Track Regular Dog Blanket

Provides natural warmth therapy with its polyester exterior. Helps increase blood circulation and reduces inflammation. Ideal for both prevention and injury recovery.

COLOR: Black SIZES: XS - L

starting at **SALE \$79**



Back On Track Quick Wraps

A great leg wrap for everyone. Quick and safe to use, especially for those less experienced in wrapping legs. This Therapeutic horse leg wrap has a shell of neoprene with a pillow wrap inside and Velcro closures.

Sold in Pairs.

COLOR: Black

SIZES: 10, 12, 14, 16

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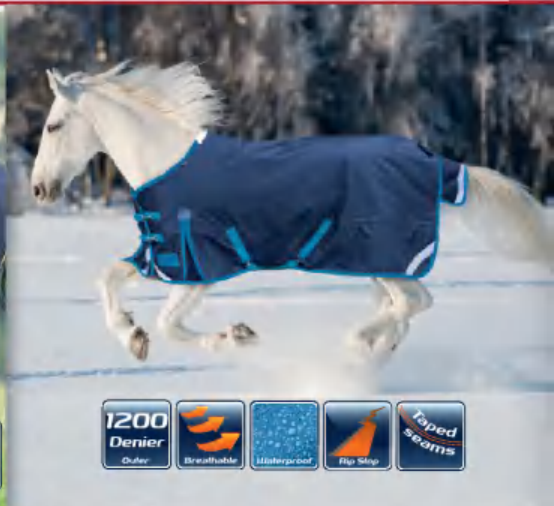


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SALE \$229

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A photograph of the Walt Disney statue in Disneyland, standing next to a large Mickey Mouse statue, with the Sleeping Beauty Castle in the background.

A photograph of three people riding horses in front of a building with a sign that reads "TEN CIRCLE D RANCH TRAIL RIDES". The sign is green with white lettering and a small horse icon. The person on the left is a woman wearing a blue plaid shirt and jeans, riding a white horse. The person in the middle is a woman wearing a blue shirt and a blue helmet, riding a dark horse. The person on the right is a man wearing a green shirt and a grey helmet, riding a dark horse. The photo is tilted and has a white border.



The Clinic

PHOTO CRITIQUES
by Susanne von Dietze

Susanne von Dietze is a leader in equestrian biomechanics. A physiotherapist, licensed Trainer A instructor and judge for dressage and show jumping, she gives lectures and seminars throughout the world, including at the prestigious German Riding Academy in Warendorf. She is a native of Germany and now lives with her husband and three children in Israel, where she competes at the international level. She is the author of two books on the biomechanics of riding: Balance in Movement and Horse and Rider, Back to Back. Find her books at HorseBooksEtc.com.



Concentrate on the Interplay of the Aids

This picture shows Brenna Nordstrom riding in a clinic on her American Hanoverian mare, Welkin, who just turned 9 years old. They currently compete at First Level and have started training some higher-level movements.

Observing the picture, I notice that there appears to be a lot of downhill movement in both the horse and the rider. Welkin's croup appears higher than her shoulders. The poll, right behind her ears, should be the highest point, not farther back in the neck. In this photo, the mare's ears are actually lower than her neck, and her stride between her hind legs is longer than the stride of her front legs.

I can see that Brenna is looking down, her wrist is bent down and her lower leg is too far back with her toes pointing down. The picture was also taken at such an angle that the impression of a downhill movement is even more apparent. If one looks at the distance of the track to the bottom of the photograph this becomes clear. Used in the opposite way, this is a photographer's trick in many auction and sales pictures to change the angle of the picture so that horses look more uphill than they actually are.

I can imagine that regular readers of *Dressage Today* and "The Clinic" are now a little surprised as I have started pointing out so many faults and not written the nice things first as I usually do. This is often how we look at riders. It is so easy to see all the

faults—and then a rider merely becomes a collection of faults and we fail to notice his or her abilities!

With all the faults pointed out, I can say that I like Brenna and Welkin and I am positive that this is just a picture of a less-than-perfect moment. Remember, you can find these moments with any rider.

Because Brenna has a nice deep connection with her seat, she has the talent and the ability to improve and develop. One thing I notice is that she appears very concentrated within herself. Riding dressage requires you to express yourself and your horse to the outside world. I would advise Brenna to look forward, ride forward, lift her head, her hands and her toes and then her horse can lift her shoulders, neck and head and stride out longer.

Dressage needs precision and control. But overcontrolling kills the freedom and beauty of movement. Dare to release and give. Riding with a more forward-giving tendency in your hands is very important. To break her habit of holding back and to encourage Welkin into a better self-carriage, Brenna should concentrate on an interplay of her aids. She should stretch from her seat, look up and encourage Welkin with her legs for more activity in her



Courtesy, Brenna Nordstrom

Brenna Nordstrom rides her 9-year-old American Hanoverian mare, Welkin, at First Level.

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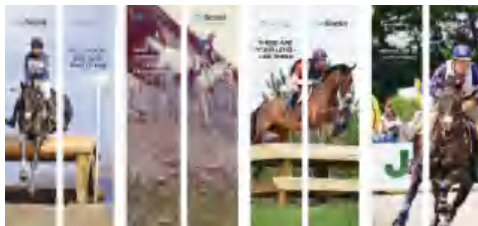
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hind legs. She should reward Welkin by gently pushing both hands a bit forward. If possible, this can become a short release like in the German *überstreichen*. Soon Welkin will learn that every time she becomes more active behind, she will feel more freedom in front and start carrying herself and move more uphill.

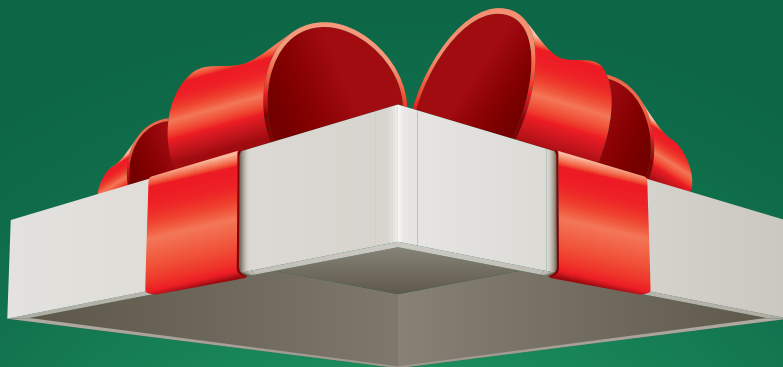
Sometimes in a clinic I use a rhythmic game to help students find a more automatic interplay between activating a horse's hind legs and controlling the movement without holding them back. I tell my students to **try this in trot**: For one stride, think about your own balance, uprightness and your seat. In the next stride, think about your legs and the horse's activity behind. Then think back to your balance in your seat, then to the lightness of the contact, then to your balance. In short it would be: Balance–Activity–Balance–Contact–Balance and repeat.

This interplay of aids always going through the rider's seat from back to front and back can be understood as the throughness of the aids. If you try this exercise correctly, neither rider nor horse can get stuck in one way. Then they can develop more lightness. I am sure that Brenna has the ability and talent to improve and perform with more elegance and lightness within her riding. 📷



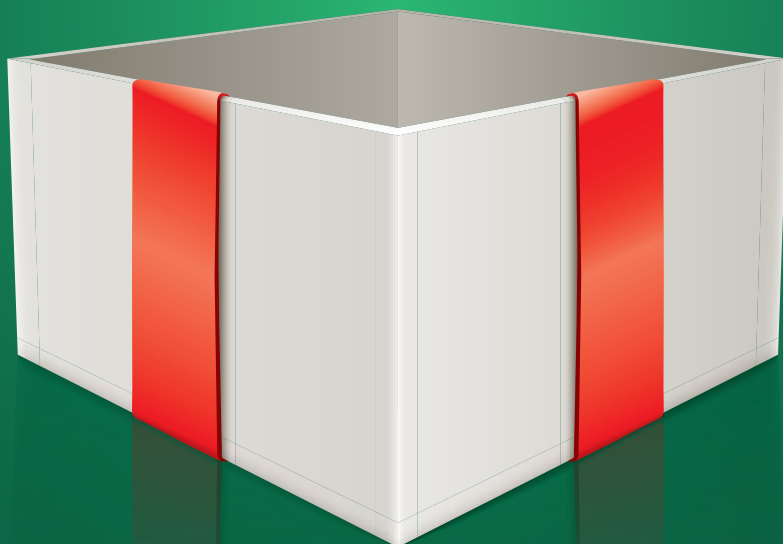
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You can submit your high-resolution dressage photo for critique (300 dpi and 4 by 6 inches in size). Or you can send your photo with a link to a short video. Email to DressageToday@AimMedia.com. Turnout in dressage show or clinic-appropriate attire is encouraged. Don't forget your helmet!



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Scott Hassler with Harmony's Diamo Gold (left), an 8-year-old Oldenburg gelding, and Harmony's Star Agent, a 9-year-old Oldenburg gelding, both owned by Harmony Sporthorses



COACH YOUR HORSE FOR *Success*

One of America's top trainers talks about how to improve your horse's performance by being an ideal coach for him.

By Scott Hassler with Beth Baumert • Photos by Amy Dragoo

I'm addicted to coaching. I read books about coaching and when I watch professional sports, I'm focused on what the coaches are doing to lead their teams. Do they need to get after their players a bit and motivate them or do they need to make them believe in themselves more? I wouldn't want to play for someone who dictated, screamed and made me feel I wasn't good enough. Understanding the qualities of a good coach is the first step to being able to coach your horse well. The second step is knowing your horse. Those two abilities work for you as a rider to optimize your horse's chance for success.

Skills of a Great Coach

The ideal coach:

- ...is a great motivator
- ...makes his athlete believe he can succeed
- ...knows the strengths and weaknesses of his athlete well
- ...knows how to play off the strengths and improve the weaknesses
- ...has a strategy for optimizing success and
- ...is experienced and knowledgeable about the sport and the level to be performed.

An ideal coaching style combines these skills with beauty and tact, and the riders I respect most use them when they're riding. They don't falsely build their horses up, and their horses never feel defeated. When a good coach addresses an issue, the horse receives the correction by thinking, *Yes, I'll try harder for you! Got it!* It's a beautiful dialog because of the coaching style. Ride your horse as if you were the ideal employer. When your horse loves going to work for you, you'll get the best results from him.



If your horse can't stretch well in the beginning of the ride, don't do it. Stretching should be included at some point, but maybe your horse doesn't do it well until the middle of the ride.

workout for a Second Level horse should include stretching, lateral work and transitions within and between gaits. It should include relaxation, high concentration, motivation, exercises that improve a weakness and exercises that build upon the horse's highlights to improve self-esteem and refresh the horse. For me, thinking this way for each individual horse is the most addicting aspect of training horses.

If you and your horse are both familiar with the Second Level exercises and you know what a workout should include, then think outside the box to figure out how you can be the best coach for your horse. My advice, for the moment, is to forget what is normal. For example, the usual thought about stretching is to do it at the beginning of the ride. If your horse can't stretch very well in the beginning of the ride, don't do it. Stretching should be included at some point, but maybe your horse doesn't do it well until the middle of the ride.

Forget what is classical and correct and forget what last week's clinician told you. Instead, simply listen to your horse and ask yourself *What does my horse thrive on?*

- Some horses love to have the clarity of sets. They know, *First I do this and then I do that*, and the consistency makes them comfortable.
- Some horses like to change the frame a lot but others use that as a way to get out of the work.
- Some horses are good at piaffe, and it makes the gaits better balanced. Maybe your horse can use that early in the ride.
- Maybe your horse's best gait is canter. Whereas the norm is to walk in the

Knowing Your Horse

When I travel to give clinics, I see some riders who have a false reality of how good their horse is. They're caught in that love factor and they're not working to find out how they can be better.

I also see horses being told they're wrong, but those horses often don't understand what was wrong. For example, if the horse was too strong, a rider might stop him promptly. That tells the horse, "stop pulling." But that's all it says and it doesn't prevent the horse from pulling again 20 strides later. Great coaches want to know why the horse was pulling. Maybe he was frustrated or maybe he was tired. Perhaps he misunderstood the rider. He might be out of balance or he might need suppling.

I'm not saying that halting was the wrong correction, but what the rider does after that is what matters. The rider

might decide that his horse was tired and so he takes a walk break. Maybe the horse had just been asked for three extensions. In that case, the good coach says to himself, *Of course he's pulling. I need to own this problem.* Thinking like a coach is working for your horse and for success.

Once a rider knows his horse and has that coaching attitude and ability, he can plan a custom workout that optimizes his horse's chance for success.

The Custom Workout

Developing a custom workout requires not only knowing your horse but also knowing the task at hand. Let's say you have a Second Level horse. The test movements required at Second Level are shoulder-in, travers, renvers, collected and medium gaits, simple changes, rein-back and turns on the haunches.

We also know the ideal complete

beginning, then stretch in the trot and then do some canter work, start with the gait in which your horse has the best balance and the most confidence. So canter before you do trot work. Try that for a week or two, and if your horse gets better and better, put it in a journal. Whenever I have an idea that proves to be successful because my horse told me so, it gets written down

and then I can go back to it later.

Doing the things your horse loves makes him feel good. As you listen to your horse, you'll find his weaknesses, too. Be careful not to attack a weakness. Instead, make it better little by little. Addressing a weakness too strongly by trying to suddenly make it a highlight can overwhelm your horse, which will most likely affect his desire to work

for you and cause a lack of confidence. Maybe, for example, your horse has trouble keeping the rhythm and bend in lateral work. That issue needs to be improved gradually day by day and month by month. If you think, *I have a show in two weeks and my half pass to the right is a 5*, and then you try to make it an 8, you may end up with less than a 5 and kill your horse's spirit in the process. Work

Remember the Outside Aids

Riders often get too addicted to the aids on the inside of the horse in shoulder-in and in other movements, too. Riders think about how the inside rein feels and if the horse is bent around the inside leg, but while they're feeling that bend, they're too often ignoring the opposing side. The inside is only 50 percent. The shoulder-in has no chance if the horse is soft on the inside but flat and dull on the outside. If the horse is dull on the outside rein, he is leaning on it and there is no longer a connection. The horse needs to feel as alive on the outside as he does on the inside, so riding the corner or circle correctly before any movement is critical. Without help from the outside aids in corners, circles and movements, the horse will tip to the inside, flatten and slide through the outside.

Create exercises that balance your horse left and right so he feels alive in both reins, not alive in one and dull in the other. Try this exercise to improve the influence of your outside aids.

1. Begin tracking right from C. At M, prepare to leg yield right to the quarter line. This preparation to leg yield aligns the left shoulder. It gets the poll correct and the horse supple in the left rein.
2. In the leg yield right, feel that the left side of your horse becomes stable and supportive as your horse steps from behind with his left leg as a result of your left leg aid.
3. On the quarterline, ask your horse to bend into that stabilized area and develop shoulder-in right. You should feel that the shoulders move to the inside easily and the outside of your horse is alive and working through.



Begin tracking right from C



At M, leg yield right to the quarterline. This leg yield helps the left side of your horse become stable and supportive.



Then develop shoulder-in right on the quarterline. This exercise helps control the horse's outside (left) shoulder.

on the weaknesses wisely.

- Does your horse fatigue quickly? Then take more walk breaks.
- Do your horse's gaits feel tight? Maybe he needs to stretch more often.
- Some horses can't concentrate for long, and that should determine the time you work on one exercise.

Developing a productive personal warm-up is an art. Read your horse: Af-

ter the training session, how did he perceive his workout? Hopefully he doesn't think, *Uhhhh! I can't wait to go back to my stall after all those boring transitions.* Instead, he might think, *Wow, we got the energy up a notch, but that was awesome! I understood that!*

The good coach asks himself, *How much can I push right now? What is fair? Should I take that break mentally or physi-*

cally? Maybe you think your horse needs a few days break from the challenges and then you can ramp it up again.

The coaching rider ought to be able to inspire the horse, rev him up without tension and then relax him with beautiful, subtle, quiet aids. That's the addictive situation we're trying for. You'll be rewarded with an elastic, supple and confident horse under you.

RIGHT: If your horse has a gorgeous trot, then you want the same feeling of animation and confidence in the shoulder-in as you had on the straight line. Here is Scott and Harmony's Star Agent.

BELOW: Imagine an elegant, cadenced trot on a straight line. The horse is in a beautiful balanced frame and he's active, energetic and swinging through his back.



A Movement as A Sensation

Your horse experiences a movement such as shoulder-in as a physical sensation. If he resists, it's not because he doesn't want to do shoulder-in or he doesn't have the work ethic or that resistance is in his mindset. When he enters a difficult movement, he gets a sensation in his body.

He might feel tight in his poll, in his right shoulder, his back or his right hock. His body says, *That's difficult.* It's not his mind saying he doesn't want to work for you. If we think about the feeling or the sensation that a particular movement gives the horse, we can learn why he might shut down and we can learn what he needs.

Let's use shoulder-in as an example. But first, we should define shoulder-in and look at how your horse's body parts are influenced in the movement. Instead of his body being on a straight line, it is bent (let's say to the right) on a three-track angle to the arena wall. The shoulders are pointed as if he were going to go across the diagonal. Now the shoulders and forelegs can't go straight because if they do, the horse will, in fact, go across the diagonal. So you tell him, "No, no, we're going this way—di-



rectly down the long side." Now your horse needs to open his shoulders so his front legs step to the side—to the left in this shoulder-in right. That's a completely different physical sensation to the horse. Your horse has to welcome the sensation of the shoulders opening and stepping to the left in shoulder-in right, and as a good coach, you teach him this and encourage him through it.

The Ideal Shoulder-in

The ideal shoulder-in starts with the ideal collected trot: Imagine an elegant, cadenced trot on a straight line. The contact feels super and the horse is in a beautiful balanced frame. He's active, energetic and swinging through his back.

If, when you enter a shoulder-in, any aspect of the ideal trot changes, then it isn't a shoulder-in. The rider has to accept that even if the bend is perfect and the tracking of the legs is perfect, it isn't a shoulder-in if the trot expression changes by getting flatter than the horse's ideal trot. Even though you could get a 7.5 for it, you, as a rider and a coach, can't be satisfied with it if your horse shows you better gaits on a straight line. You're satisfied only when he reaches the optimum. If he has a gorgeous trot, then you want the same feeling of animation and confidence in the shoulder-in as you have on the straight line.

When the horse enters the shoulder-in from his ideal trot, many things can go wrong:

- The contact can suddenly change.
- The horse can lose rhythm.
- He can lose the bend and swing the hind legs out onto four tracks. Then, instead of engag-

ing the hind legs in bend, he has stiffened and pivoted onto the forehand.

- The horse can lose his balance.
- He can get behind the leg.

In addition, each individual rider's understanding of shoulder-in and the coordination of aids complicate the matter, but basically we just need to control the horse's shoulders. To help control the shoulders, check out the sidebar, "Remember the Outside Aids," on p. 43, and try the exercise. When your shoulder-in needs help, you need to coach your horse through his problems.


Coaching Through Problems

When problems arise, the good coach says to himself, *Well, that movement isn't so easy for my horse, so how can I gymnastically find ways to improve his confidence in that sensation?*

It takes a bit of experience to break the movement down, think it through and make good choices. But I hope that most riders reading this have a trainer or a coach who can help them step back and analyze, realizing that horses don't inherently want to be resistant. The movement often just needs to be re-explained or perhaps explained differently. For example:

Maybe it needs to be done in a different tempo. Find the ideal tempo. Some people are inclined to slow the horse down to keep a consistent rhythm. I'm not saying that's wrong. That might be effective for a hot horse because there's plenty of activity in a hot horse. But for a lazy horse, there isn't enough internal energy to lift the shoulders. If you slow the lazy horse down, he will become

The Three Phases of Learning a Movement

 In my mind, horses learn a movement such as shoulder-in through a progression of three phases, and the more you understand your horse in these three phases, the better you understand him:

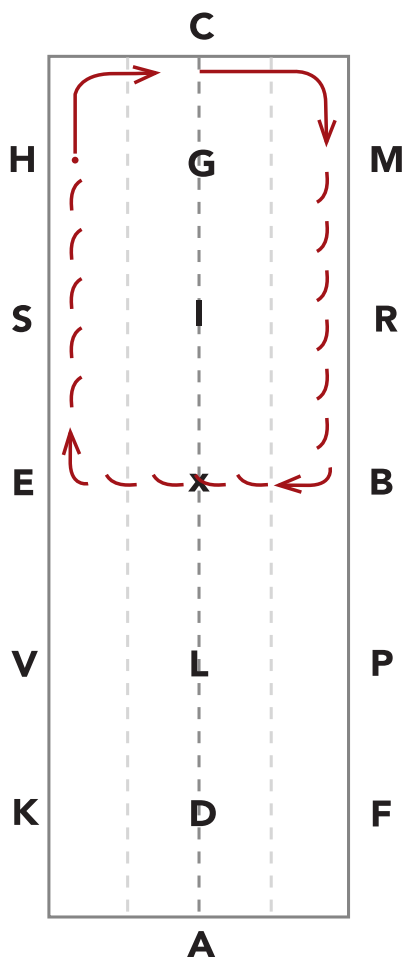
Phase 1—The Experiment. In Phase 1 of the horse's learning a movement, it is an experiment—a new experience. At this point, you're doing a little research to see how your horse responds. The horse is seeing what the shoulder-in is like, and you're observing how your horse manages his new challenge.

Phase 2—It is Understood and Mature. The movement becomes understood and mature gradually. During this phase, you don't want to give your horse a lot of options that would be frustrating and confusing to him. He needs to have a clear understanding of exactly what shoulder-in is.

Phase 3—You Own It. After your horse understands the movement, you can start to add options. You can ride it with a few more half halts, with a little more power, a little more tempo or a little more bend. Start to experiment with that shoulder-in so you really own it. You feel you could get 8.5 or 9 every time for that shoulder-in.

For some movements, such as ones that your horse finds very difficult, I would advise that you never try to own. For example, if your horse has trouble with the rhythm in a steep trot half pass, you want to be satisfied with a 7 that is understood and mature. Don't mess with it. If you do, pretty soon it will get irregular again and the contact will get worse. It's not worth trying to own it because you might not only end up with a 5, but you might frustrate your horse rather than help him. Just be happy that your horse understands it, it's consistent, mature and you can earn a confident 7. Decide what movements you can own and go for a score of 8 or 9. Those will be your horse's highlights. This is understanding your horse. Strategy is one of the things that makes a good coach, and this is strategy.

Exercise 1



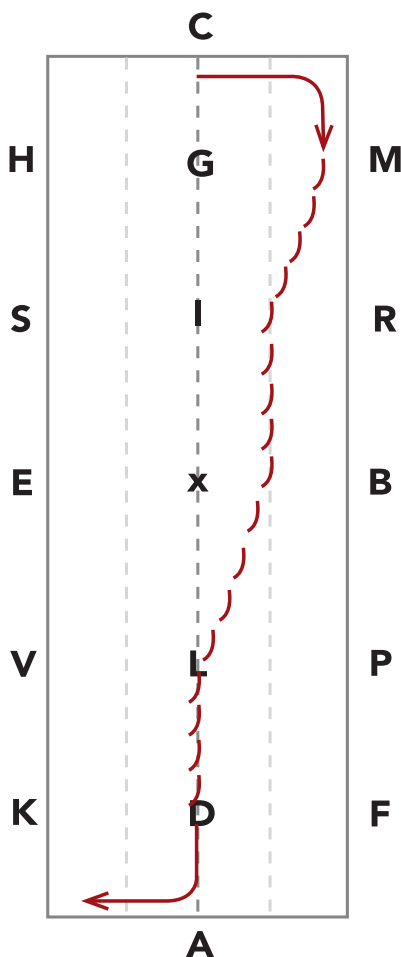
disengaged and on the forehand. You need enough energy in the horse so he can lift his shoulders. The foundation requirement is energy and desire, so the horse can lift his shoulders and learn to go down the line with it.

Maybe you need to ask for fewer strides. You might enter the shoulder-in well, but then maybe he loses the rhythm or gets behind the leg. Instead of doing a shoulder-in down the entire long side, ride several shoulder-ins with fewer strides in each one. Or try this exercise:

Exercise 1

1. Track right from C. Do shoulder-in from M to B
2. then turn and do another shoulder-in across the ring to E.
3. Then do another to H. Get creative so your horse learns to deliver a quality shoulder-in for fewer strides and then

Exercise 2



he can put them together.

If you have a rhythm problem, maybe you need to decrease the bend. Then the shoulders will stay more level and the horse will have an easier time keeping the rhythm.

Transitions might help. If your horse gets tight in his back, try using trot-walk-trot or canter-trot-canter transitions. This will help relax the back and create swing and elasticity in his gaits. If your horse is out of balance and/or a bit

dull to your aids, try using trot-halt-trot or canter-walk-canter transitions. This will help him to rebalance and create more impulsion as well as create more sensitivity to your aids

Maybe you need to ride your shoulder-in in a different frame—either longer or shorter or higher or lower.

Maybe you need to do shoulder-in after another movement so you set it up differently. For example, try this:

Exercise 2

Ride transitions between half pass right and shoulder-in right.

1. Track right from C. At M, half pass right to the quarterline
2. On the quarterline, shoulder-in right
3. When you are between B and E, half pass right to the centerline
4. On the centerline, shoulder-in right
5. At D, straighten and turn right.
6. Repeat from K or change directions and do the exercise to the left.

This exercise helps a horse figure out how to be lighter, more balanced and freer through the inside shoulder.

Reading your horse is an art. Let him show you the way. His feedback is critical. Learn what he thrives on that builds his confidence and what he finds difficult that needs nurturing. The more a horse thrives, the more he can feel good about himself and the more he will be willing to try during hard moments. If you have that coaching mindset in training sessions, you'll be ahead of the game. Through the horse's mind is the best way to his body. 🐾

Scott Hassler was the USEF National Young Horse Dressage Coach from 2005–2015, chaired the USDF sport-horse committee and has served on the USEF dressage committee for more than 10 years. A sought-after clinician, he has conducted many National Dressage Symposiums for USEF, USDF and several national breed associations. Hassler Dressage is located at Riveredge in Chesapeake City, Maryland, and winters are spent at Four Winds Farm in Wellington Florida, both owned by John and Leslie Malone.



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DRESSAGE IN THE BIG

Charlotte Dujardin shares her training principles with eager fans during the Rolex Central Park Horse Show.

By Nancy Jaffer

It was one of those “make lemonade out of lemons” situations: The Rolex Central Park Horse Show had proudly announced that Charlotte Dujardin, the world’s No. 1-ranked dressage rider, would be appearing in the Wollman Rink with Valegro, the world’s No. 1-ranked dressage horse. Then Valegro’s connections decided it would be too much for him to make an overseas trip in September after his multi-medal European Championships outing in August.

So Charlotte honored the contract on her own, and U.S. Dressage Coach Robert Dover fixed her up with a catch ride, Evi Strasser’s beautiful but challenging Renaissance Tyme. Charlotte, unconcerned about what could happen to her image by putting on a less-than-perfect performance with a horse she didn’t know, gave an exhibition during the freestyle competition. She also agreed to present a master class that closed the show on Sunday, where she offered tips and thoughts that were useful for rapt spectators, whether their experience was at Training Level or Grand Prix. Robert commentated, adding his views to a valuable package that offered insight into the way she works her magic. And the fact that Charlotte had moments where all did not go smoothly with her new mount gave the superstar some common ground with her audience. The following is advice Charlotte shared during her ride in Manhattan:

Despite a late announcement that the presentation was being offered, the stands were about two-thirds full of fans, eager to hear what Charlotte could tell them about how to develop a horse. The master class was the day after Charlotte rode a freestyle exhibition to the same “How to Train Your Dragon” music she uses with Valegro. Wisely, she made the choreography easier since she was unfamiliar with the 12-year-old Renaissance Tyme (Royal Diamond x Dream of Heidelberg).

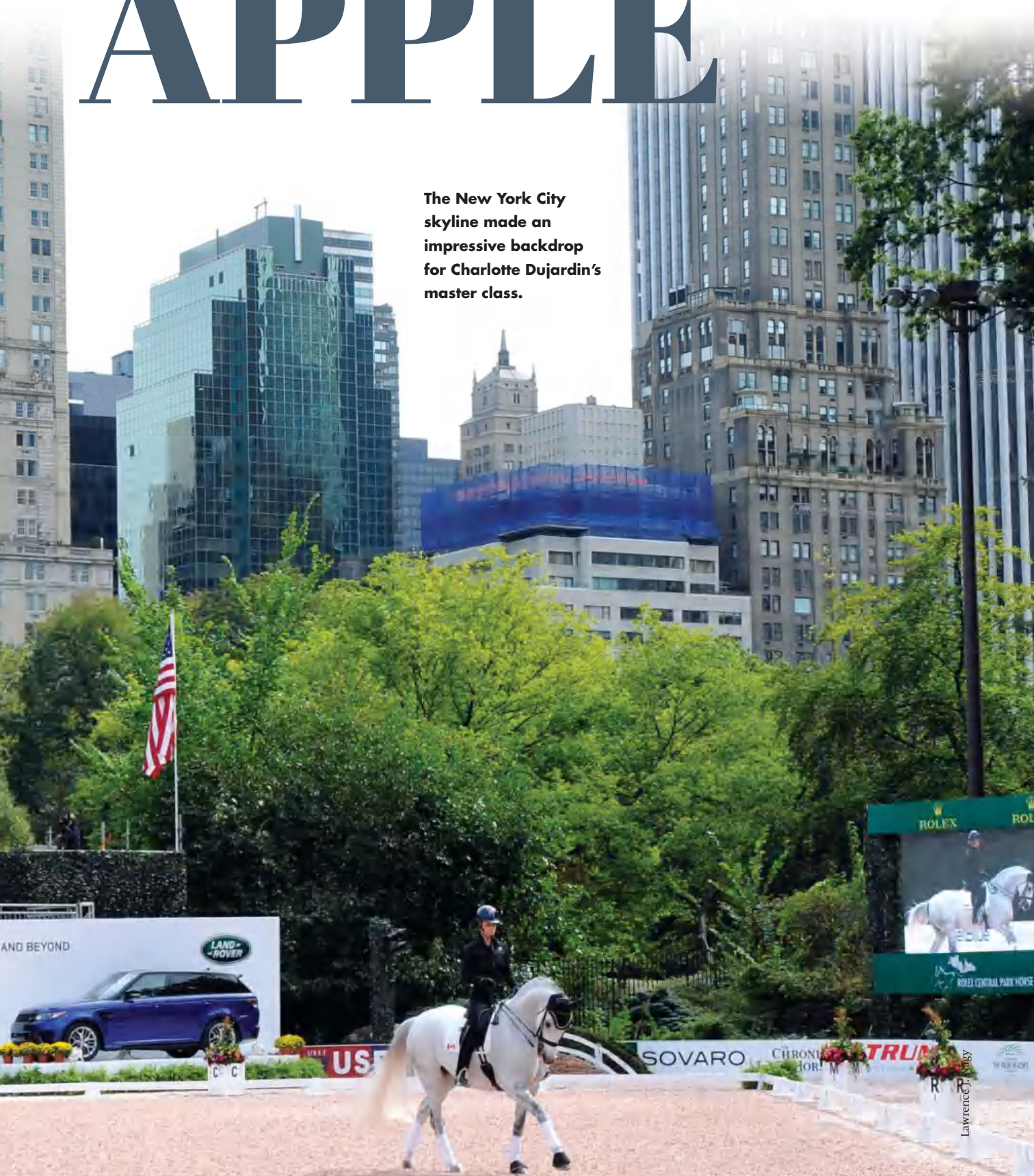
Dressed in black, a nice contrast to her mount’s gray coat, Charlotte went through the building blocks of her training routine aboard Evi’s high-energy Oldenburg. She started by explaining the importance of a proper warm-up, beginning by stretching the horse, making him relaxed, supple and as loose as possible before getting into serious work. “What I’m trying to do is get the base to be as long and low and stretched as possible, so that behind the saddle, he raises his back and these muscles here start to move and he uses himself in the right way,” she said as she placed her hand on the area behind the saddle.

While warming up, Charlotte kept her hands low, trying to get the horse as even in the contact as possible. She compared a horse to a gymnast, noting that you wouldn’t expect gymnasts to go through



APPLE

The New York City skyline made an impressive backdrop for Charlotte Dujardin's master class.



Charlotte executes a flying change on Renaissance Tyme.



Nancy Jaffer

their routine without the proper warm-up, adding that the same principle applies to any athlete.

At home in England, even before Charlotte mounts up, the routine for the horses begins with riders from her barn taking them for a 15-minute hack. The proper warm-up sets the tone for the work. "This is the foundation. It's like building a house. If you have a bad foundation, you're going to have a bad house. If you have bad basics on a horse, you're going to run into problems," she pointed out.

How many dressage horses never leave the ring except for a little hand-grazing? Charlotte's horses are on a completely different program. They go for trail rides on the roads and fields twice a week and have the day off on Sunday, when they are turned out to relax—even Valegro. This is all part of a schedule that

keeps them fresh. The fact that they've seen things other than the arena makes it easier for them when they go to shows.

Charlotte emphasized that everything must be done correctly from the first step and mistakes should be corrected properly and promptly. She believes that bad habits start when a horse makes a mistake and is allowed to stop. Robert agreed, noting how the spectators were fortunate to witness challenges in Charlotte's ride and how she reacted to them.

"It's all about repetition, correction and being strong with yourself," Charlotte said. "A rider needs discipline and cannot let bad habits happen.

If you make bad transitions at home just because you're lazy or not really thinking about it, you're going to make bad transitions in the arena. When someone says about their horse's performance, 'Oh well, he did this

or he did that,' that's because you allowed him in the first place to make all those mistakes."

After Renaissance Tyme made an error in a flying change, Charlotte corrected him immediately, then moved on, illustrating what she was saying. She noted, "It's important you work with the horse, not against him," and a case in point was the harmony she had achieved in a short time with an animal who obviously was not an easy ride. "If he's afraid of something, I can reassure him and be positive and say 'it's OK' and then he trusts me and carries on, rather than being afraid," she commented.

To ease the tension in the horse, she rode every moment of the walk, guiding him in slow, deliberate steps until she had him where she wanted him, then let him stride out. "When he starts to take over, I literally ride the walk until

I feel I'm in control," she said. "Then I can give the rein a bit."

She noted that some horses find it easier to start their work with the canter rather than the trot. Whichever gait is being pursued, however, she said, "When I touch him with my reins, he should stop. If I touch him with my leg, he should go. So he always learns to wait for me and not ever take over."

Charlotte noted that the extended and collected walk movements have double co-efficients in a test and that those are big marks to lose because of tension. Robert observed how she is keyed into the basic gaits. "It's in her nature to only ride a correct walk, a correct trot and a correct canter," he said. "There are balance issues and rhythm issues she is dealing with without realizing she's actually doing it. It just shows the quality of this rider."

When it comes to a horse's gaits, Charlotte says she looks for quality in the walk and the canter when horse shopping. While she believes you can make a horse better, she doesn't believe the walk and canter can be changed the way the trot can—by teaching suspension, which allows the horse to lengthen and float. "Even an ugly horse you can make look pretty special," she contended.


To bring the horse's back up in self-carriage and create this suspension, she touches him with her legs and rides a half halt. Then she rides forward and tries to keep the suspension in the trot.

Charlotte emphasized the horse's straightness when riding down the long side of the ring. She asked the crowd, "What is straightness?" She then explained that for a horse to be straight, he has to have his head and neck in front of his chest. Then she demonstrated how to use the corners and the short side of the ring to get the horse back and prepare


for the next long side. The horse was wrapped around her inside leg in the corners, and as Robert noted, the short side is where the rider practices half halts and riding from half halt to half halt, which is "calling the horse to a perfect state of balance so he's prepared to go through that doorway into the next movement or gait or pace as you choose."

"If I ride a bad corner, I'm going to ride a bad movement," Charlotte pointed out. She noted the horse has to find his own self-carriage and his own balance. She insists the horse carry his own head and neck. "It's not my job. He has to canter for himself. I just sit there," she said.

Leg yield in canter isn't a movement



Don't go until he gets tired and isn't working with you. It's so important you keep your horse happy so he enjoys every day of his work.



in the test, but it's a way to keep the horse supple and sideways off the leg, Charlotte advised. As she canters, she asks herself, *Is he using his own self-carriage? Is he in good balance? Is the canter in good rhythm?*

The rubber-band exercise, which she demonstrated, involved bringing the horse forward and back, rather than remaining in one steady gait. "If I touch him with my legs, it means 'Go,'" Charlotte said. "And if I touch him with my reins, it means 'Whoa.' So he slows down and understands that right from the beginning, right from a young horse, he has to learn these aids."

She noted that every horse has a good side and a bad side, where it's harder for him to accomplish his work. "As a rider, it's always easy to not do the

hard side. You always want to ride in the good direction, the easy side," she conceded. "You have to do a bit more with the bad side to make it as good as the good side." Only focusing on the easy side, she said, is cheating.

Renaissance Tyme, for instance, found it easier to proceed on the left side, while depending more on his rider on the right side. But by the time Charlotte finished with training a working pirouette, his right side had improved. At the same time, she said, "You don't want to do too much on the bad side [so] that you upset your horse."

Charlotte cautioned against going on and on with the working part of a ride, stating that if the horse is really tired, he can wind up using his muscles in the wrong way. "When he does something good, give him a walk and a breather," she advised. "As a rider, you've got to be able to feel how much work the horse can take. Don't go until he gets tired and isn't working with you. It's so important you keep your horse happy so he enjoys every day of his work."

Focusing on flying changes, Charlotte emphasized that each rider has a different method of signaling his or her horse to do the movement. During her freestyle, she made mistakes in the one-tempi changes, not knowing exactly which buttons to push on Renaissance Tyme. He also has changes that swing from side to side—rather than pushing forward, he pushes to the side when he changes. As a result, Charlotte trained him on the long side of the arena, using the wall to keep him straight, and never changed leads along the diagonal, where there was nothing to guide him. She also half halted after every change, which kept him on target.

Ideally, she pointed out, the change should be bigger than the canter stride.



Nancy Jaffer

U.S. Dressage Coach Robert Dover offered commentary as Charlotte rode and gave her lecture.

transition into passage because he has to stay thinking forward.

She noted, "The sitting motions are the piaffe and the pirouettes, and the pushing are the extensions and the passage. To have a horse who is talented to do both of those is very hard. It's the horses who can do both of those things that make very talented horses."

As Charlotte continued through the session, she went through a mental checklist: *Can I bend him? Can I straighten him? Can I stretch him? Can I collect him?* "If I can do all those things, I know I have a good horse."

Riding in The Big Apple

Charlotte had an eventful

"Everybody can do a flying change, but what makes you get a 10 for your flying changes is the height and the quality of the canter in between and the rhythm of the change," Charlotte commented.

When Renaissance Tyme struggled with his changes, she didn't make an issue of it, she just kept going, pointing out that the more you make an issue of it, the tenser the horse becomes, and then the changes never come. She pointed out that to do changes well, you have to be very quick with your legs, rather than wait for the horse to do it himself. "The rider has to stay in control of the changes, and should not let the horse speed up," she said.

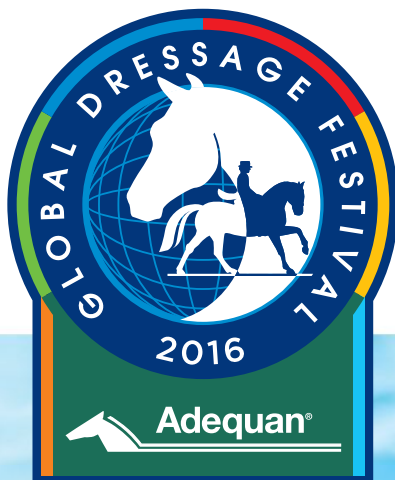
Robert pointed out that if the rein contact suddenly gets weak while the

rider is attempting the changes, then it's hard because there's nothing with which to make a half halt between changes. The connection between seat, leg and reins has to be effective in order to achieve the changes.

Moving on to piaffe and passage, Charlotte created lift and suspension by shortening her reins and touching the horse with her leg as he went into passage. Then she practiced the piaffe going forward rather than keeping him on the spot. She warned that practicing piaffe on the spot causes a tremendous amount of strain. A horse trained that way won't last, she said, and also will get behind the leg. By allowing the horse to train piaffe forward he can see a way out, and it's a method for obtaining a good

weekend, marked by the visit of Pope Francis to New York City and a Beyoncé concert in the park on the night of the freestyle. "I had a fantastic time," she said. "Who gets to ride in Central Park and gets to see the Pope and [have] Beyoncé in the background? It's been a great privilege to be here and it's been amazing to ride here. The backdrop is incredible and the arena is incredible."

Evi was impressed by her horse's progress under Charlotte's direction. She plans to work with her again and it looks as if the horse will be spending some time in England. Of the difference Charlotte made, Evi said with a grin, "He's a Ferrari now. She tuned him up. She got him even more connected. He's a totally different horse." 🐾



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MAKING IT TO THE



Advice from trainers at Aachen 2015

By Annie Morris

“the neuron path becomes a highway.”

British Olympian Carl Hester suggested that the best way to develop feel comes from the experience of training many horses to Grand Prix. “A top rider has talent for feel and timing,” he said. “The best way to develop that is to train horses up the levels.”

He pointed out that Grand Prix riders know the movements inside and out. When they know the movements that well, they own them: They can perform them any time, any place. This allows riders to adjust to whatever situation they might find in competition.

One of Germany’s youth coaches, Hans Heinrich Meyer zu Strohen, said, “You have to work first on yourself. If you want to be a top rider you have to have a top-quality seat.” He stressed the importance of feel and contact as important traits among the top riders. He suggested the best way to develop the seat is to have eyes on the ground, and not just anyone will do. Riders need someone who will be hard on them when necessary and yet someone whom they can feel comfortable relaying questions to.

Jan Bemelmans, a Belgian-born German and *chef d’équipe* for the French, said many riders on top teams often

As a dressage rider, you may strive for perfection. Do you want to be the best-possible rider? The best-possible trainer? Maybe you want to be on an international team. I had the fabulous opportunity to travel to Aachen, Germany, for the 2015

European Championships as a chaperone for The Dressage Foundation’s International Dream trip. Not only did I experience the competition among many of the world’s best horses and riders, but I spoke with many trainers and learned, straight from the source, what they did to get to the top of the sport. They were each incredibly generous in sharing their time and knowledge. They explained what the rider and horse need to succeed and how to make it from the warm-up ring to the show ring in top competitions.

Developing Feel

Experts agreed that feel is the most important aspect of the rider’s seat. Many countries have systems to identify talented young riders and guide them toward Grand Prix success. But talent is not enough. Riders have to push themselves to improve their feel.

Dressage legend Kyra Kyrklund explained how the rider educates the seat to develop feel. In the beginning, you might have the right feeling only for a moment. This is when you begin to connect the correct neurons from your brain to your body for the right feel. “At this point, the connection is a small and twisted path,” she said. Over time, you find the right feeling again and again. After many repetitions, the path gets bigger and easier to navigate. “When your seat is educated,” she said,



Carl Hester and Nip Tuck demonstrate how once a rider knows the movements inside and out, he can perform them in any situation.

Lynn van Woudenberg - Arnd.nl

grew up riding bareback. They are riders who have taken many longe lessons without reins and/or stirrups. "That is how you develop body control and feel," he said.

Henk van Bergen, an international trainer who has coached many teams, talked about how to achieve your goals as a rider. "If you want to get somewhere," he said, "you have to work a little harder and be a little better than

anyone else."

You might have a dream to be on a team, move to the next level or simply improve one movement. Ultimately, he said, "You have to be happy if you are better tomorrow than you are today."

Developing the Horse

A successful rider needs a top horse. Maybe it is your own horse or perhaps you train him for someone else. Bemel-

mans stressed that the horse has to have good gaits, "but you win with the personality," he said.

"Many good horses are difficult to start." He spoke of horses with a strong personality and lots of energy being the best at the top of the sport, but perhaps are easily offended or strong-headed in the beginning of their training.

Hester agreed that you can't guarantee a trainable horse by his or her



Jessica von Bredow-Werndl competes with Unee BB at Aachen 2015.

Jessica von Bredow-Werndl's Warm-up

One of the most pleasing schooling rides witnessed at Aachen 2015 occurred on the day off before the Grand Prix Special. German rider Jessica von Bredow-Werndl rode Unee BB in a way that expertly demonstrated the feel required of an international rider. After many minutes of walking, she began her ride with a stretching trot followed by a little hand-gallop in a light seat. Unee BB at first seemed reluctant to open up in the hand-gallop, but it was clear that von Bredow-Werndl was encouraging him in a playful way with her aids, and by the end of the warm-up, her horse looked much looser and more energetic.

She began schooling the canter first and continued to incorporate her playfulness to keep Unee BB active, especially in the changes, which she practiced on the track. She gave him many breaks and was quick to pat and encourage him. When she began to work on the trot, she removed her stirrups. She was not only working on the horse, she was working on herself. The piaffe and passage work got better and better, and it was clear how she was stable in her seat yet was able to encourage Unee BB to lift off the ground by almost lightening herself. She had short work sessions followed by breaks. At the end of the ride she stretched him again in rising trot without stirrups. During the entire ride, von Bredow-Werndl had the biggest smile across her face. She was clearly enjoying her ride and happy to be there.

talented gaits. He suggested that you find a horse with a nice walk, trot and canter but then you have to sit on him. Feel his temperament and measure his reactions to your aids. If he has a good reaction, you can teach him anything.

When it comes to starting these horses, Hester said he and British double-Olympic-gold medalist Charlotte Dujardin don't personally do the breaking in. The horses they train were ideally started for about a month as 3 1/2-year-olds then turned out until the beginning of the year when they are 4, which is when the formal training begins.

Kyrklund agreed that when she looks for a horse, she tries to find one with an exceptional personality. She is aware of the bloodlines but does not solely use them to make her decision. "Horses are individuals," she said. She looks at the sire, but advised, "They have a mother, too."

Training and Fitness

When you train the horse from the beginning to the highest levels, it is perhaps most important to keep him sound. Kyrklund is a huge proponent of walking. She makes sure her horses are hand-walked daily to keep them fit and loose and also to keep their minds active by exploring the surroundings.

Kyrklund also suggests experimenting with the riding schedule to find what works best to train the horse and yet not overwork him and make him cranky or wear him out. She sometimes schools her horses and works on the trot one day and then on the canter the next. Some days she focuses mostly on the horse's outline. To determine the right schedule, she listens to the horse. "He will tell you what he needs," she said. She first teaches the horse what is easiest for him to learn. For example, if the horse is ready to

Charlotte Dujardin (right) and Kristina Bröring-Sprehe are top riders who have skill, talent, luck and a strong desire to win.

learn piaffe and passage as a 6-year-old, she starts to play with the half steps and doesn't wait until the canter is at the same level of collection. Some horses have talent for particular movements that can be utilized to improve their work without asking too much from them.

Hester has an organized way to train his horses week by week. He found out early on that horses are better the second day of riding, so he breaks the

week into two sets of three days plus a day off. The horses work two days and then hack out on the third. This puts them in the best position to learn. He also keeps the training sessions short, about 20 minutes. Before he gets on to train, the groom has walked the horse and has done a stretching warm-up. Hester trains the horse and then the groom walks him again. Hester believes that all the walking is very important for fitness as well as soundness.

"A Grand Prix rider has a Grand Prix horse in mind every time he or she rides," Hester said. The sound and happy horses that make Grand Prix as 9-year-olds do so not because they were overtrained, but because the rider accessed the horse's temperament and made it easy for him to learn.

Beatriz Ferrer-Salat of Spain won the bronze medal in the Grand Prix Free-style at the European Championships on the 14-year-old Westfalen, Delgado. She started working with him as a

6-year-old. She said he was difficult to keep sound, but she knew it was worth it to keep trying. She found the weekly regiment that worked best for Delgado includes one or two days of work, two days of hacking and two days riding out on the racetrack. He also receives regular massage and chiropractic treatments.

During the journey of training a horse to the international levels, many coaches, sponsors, veterinarians, etc. become involved with the horse-and-rider team. The experts agreed that the rider knows the horse best. "The rider has to stand up for the horse," explained Kyrklund. "It is the rider's responsibility to speak up if he or she thinks something is wrong."

In the Warm-up Ring

At the show, the quality of the warm-up is directly related to the performance of the horse and rider in the ring. Oliver Oelrich, one of Germany's youth coaches, stresses the importance of not trying

to train the horse in the warm-up ring at the show. "The warm-up," he said, "is 30 to 35 minutes of gymnastic and elastic work. If you try to train the horse during this time, he is not prepared to learn."

"The goal in warm-up is relaxation," Hester believes. He does a lot of stretching during this time but makes sure the horse is sharp and in front of the leg. He does the same warm-up routine at home and at the show, which helps to promote relaxation.

Bo Jena, *chef d'équipe* of the Swedish team, agreed and added that the warm-up is the most important aspect of competing. The horse's energy and suppleness improve over time during the ride, but he reaches a peak and then begins to decline. You need to know when that peak occurs and at that time be in the show ring to show your best work, he explained.

Kyrklund said, "The warm-up is not a competition." She does not want to show off in the warm-up ring. She wants



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Beatriz Ferrer-Salat has a special training schedule to keep Delgado happy and sound.

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to save it for the show ring. If the horse has a problem with something during the warm-up, she tries to break the issue down and make it easier for him and not push it head-on. She wants the horse calm, cool and through, ready to go in and show.

The Show Ring

When Hester goes into the show ring, he visualizes the best test he did at home. He knows the movements inside and out, so in the ring he knows how to ride each movement at his best, finish it and then ride the next. His explanation sounded simple enough, but as he discussed it further, I could tell what he said was profound. During the test he is present in every stride and every moment. His exceptional feel is utilized at 100 percent for the whole test. That is

what separates good riders from the stars of the dressage world.

Katrina Wuest, the president of the ground jury at Aachen 2015, explained that there are many qualities she notices to get an impression of a rider's education. She rewards a rider who is precise with the line of travel, accurate in the movements and who prepares transitions well. She especially notes the first halt, which makes a first impression. She gets an overall idea of how the connection and balance are in the ride, which influences the score for each movement.

It is impossible to replicate the atmosphere and desensitize the horse in advance to a stadium such as the one at Aachen. Hester uses the hack days to get the horses out on the road to experience a variety of spooky situations.

Mikala Münter Gundersen, an inter-

national dressage competitor of Denmark, said she and her horse, My Lady, have done many shows and have many miles behind them, which makes the stadium more friendly.

No matter what the atmosphere is like, Bemelmens suggested, "At the competition, the rider needs to keep his or her cool." There is a lot of pressure and a lot going on that is beyond anyone's control. To make it, the rider also needs a little luck.

Dujardin, who leads the sport with record scores, got an 89.054 percent in the *Kür* at Aachen 2015. She was asked if she was afraid of German rider Kristina Bröring-Sprehe, whose scores were closing in at 88.804 percent. "It doesn't make me afraid," she said, "It makes me fight harder." That is the attitude of a true champion. 🇩🇪

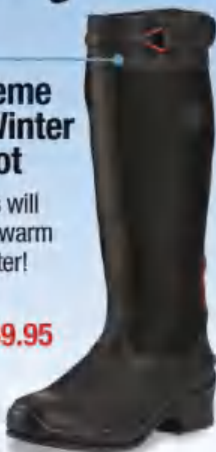
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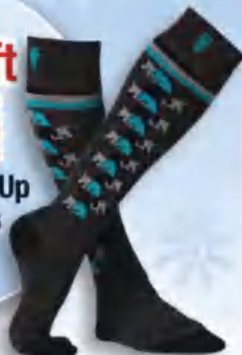
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CATCHING A RIDE

Tips and advice from collegiate dressage coaches and riders

By Kat Neis

For many collegiate dressage riders, the challenge of academics is often coupled with another challenge: adjusting to a new dressage-show system based on catch riding. Catch riding, although more popular in the hunter/jumper show circuits, has gained traction in the dressage world, particularly among colleges whose teams participate in the Intercollegiate Dressage Association (IDA). IDA offers the opportunity for riders to continue, or even begin, their riding careers in college. Over the past several years, IDA has become immensely popular as an educational and fun, yet challenging, way for riders to continue their equestrian careers in college without owning a horse or making a huge financial commitment.

A Brief History

Founded in 1995, IDA began as an informal competition between a small group of colleges in the northeastern United States. However, it quickly grew into more than that. Today the organization has more than 55 member schools across the United States and approximately 700 riders competing at regional and national shows yearly.

Beth Beukema, president of IDA, has been involved since the organization's beginnings, when a student designed the basic structure of the competition and the point system, much of which is still in use today. Beukema praises the organization's ability to introduce new students to dressage as well as provide a cost-effective opportunity for riders with previous experience. Because the IDA show system is designed specifically for collegiate equestrians, many of whom don't own a horse, it eliminates the challenges of ownership by featuring a catch-riding system. At a show, riders are randomly assigned a horse from the host university's stable and given 10 minutes to develop a basic understanding of the horse before the official test. Catch riding is one of the unique challenges that IDA poses, and even



Courtesy, Kate Randall

riders who have participated in Young Riders at Prix St. Georges may find riding in IDA challenging, says Beukema.

Although an IDA team may have upwards of 30 riders, only four members are allowed to compete during an individual show. For larger universities, this results in some members being able to compete only a few times during the season, whereas members on small teams may be able to compete at every show. The tests and judging are just like those at any other dressage show—but the benefits, and certainly the challenges, are found in the catch-riding component of the organization.



Courtesy: Casual Creations Photography

Benefits and Value

For many IDA riders who are hoping to pursue a career in the equine industry, the benefits of riding in IDA are tremendous. Kari Briggs, coach for Otterbein University's IDA team, business manager of the university's equine center as well as an IDA regional representative, says that as an equine professional she draws on her previous experiences from riding a variety of horses.

Even riders who are following career paths outside the industry can find many benefits from an IDA experience. Take Sophia Rocco, a recent graduate of University of California, Santa Cruz.

ABOVE: The 2015 IDA National Champions from Emory and Henry College (from left) Coach Lisa Moosmueller-Terry, Nicholas Martino, Bailey Halverson, Karissa Donohue, Elijah Worth-Jones, Morgan Sollenberger, Amanda Snow and Emma Baltuskoknis

LEFT INSET: Founded in 1995, the Intercollegiate Dressage Association (IDA) now has more than 55 member schools across the United States and approximately 700 riders competing at regional and national shows yearly. Pictured, Sophia Rocco rides for the University of California, Santa Cruz.

A physics major, Rocco showed IDA all four years of college. She says not only did she learn to be a more flexible and adaptable rider, but she also credits IDA for keeping her mentally balanced and happy while facing academic pressures. "Riding is what keeps me happy and

sane when school gets stressful," she says. "So riding was less of a luxury than a necessity."

Of course, for riders pursuing equestrian careers, the opportunity to show and ride frequently is one of the greatest benefits. Kelsie Bricker graduated in 2015

After a 10-minute warm-up, the IDA rider is led into the arena for the official test. Because riders don't have enough time to truly know the horse, it can be challenging to head into the ring while still learning.

from Otterbein University and she notes the organization's impact on her becoming more comfortable in the show ring. She expects this confidence to serve her well in any future equestrian endeavor.

Lisa Moosmueller-Terry, vice president of IDA and IDA coach for Emory and Henry University in Emory, Virginia, echoes the importance of being an adaptable rider. "A well-rounded rider who has the ability for adaptation is going to be a far better rider," she says. Moosmueller-Terry has achieved great success in the IDA show ring with a victory at the 2015 IDA Nationals in addition to several past Nationals wins with Virginia InterMont College.

Finally, IDA offers a unique aspect of dressage that is not often found in the traditional show system: team spirit. Beukema says that the team feeling is one of the greatest advantages of IDA and one of the many reasons that IDA riders love the program. Each rider on the team, whether they are riding First Level or Introductory Level, contributes to the school's overall team placement, resulting in a feeling of camaraderie. Rocco says she enjoyed the team aspect: "[It] was a very positive and supportive experience. Dressage is usually such a solitary and personal sport, so I didn't quite know at first how it would translate to a team sport. Turns out, it's a really good feeling to have that team."

Before the Test

Preparation is one of the most crucial elements to a successful IDA ride and that preparation begins long before the 10-minute warm-up. When a team arrives at the host university, riders ob-



Courtesy, Otterbein University

serve each available horse in the "parade of horses," which serves as a great opportunity to analyze the horse from the ground. Briggs recommends looking at the quality of the horse, his gaits and his general behavior in the ring.

When analyzing the horses from the ground, Moosmueller-Terry says that riders must develop a good eye. For many riders, this is best done with the help of a trainer or a more experienced peer. "Watching a lot of horses with someone who is educated will help you know what to look for," she says. She teaches her riders to look at the overall connection and impulsion of the horse before formulating a plan for the ride. "Then we observe the horse as he performs parts of the test and decide what we need to work on in our warm-up. We may need to work to get the horse in front of the leg or utilize transitions to get a better response to the half halt."

In addition to the parade, each host university compiles a cheat sheet for all IDA riders to use on the available horses. It typically offers tidbits of information, such as "Mac can be heavy on the forehand," or "Chocolate doesn't like spurs." Although some of the information is useful, Jec Ballou, FEI-level trainer and IDA coach for University of California, Santa Cruz, warns against relying on it too heavily. "Many riders read these notes as the gospel," she says. "It can be



a real disservice to enter the show ring with assumptions about a horse."

Ballou also recommends knowing what the directive ideas and collective marks are per USEF standards. Like any dressage test, reading the test objectives is important. If there is a coefficient component, it is good to be aware of that element and perhaps devote some extra time to it during the warm-up if other aspects are going well.

Helpful Skills

To achieve a partnership and create a harmonious ride, there are a variety of skills that can be developed. Often college coaches are instrumental to a rider's success. In addition, many college riding programs offer great opportunities for riders to improve their skills by riding with a variety of accomplished trainers.

One of the most important things is the opportunity to ride a variety of horses on a regular basis. For schools



Courtesy, Otterbein University

with large equestrian programs, this doesn't pose as much of a challenge, but for schools with small programs, this can be more difficult.

When training at Otterbein University, Briggs says her team rides a variety of horses, which serves them well in the show ring. "Riders who have the ability to catch-ride well or riders who are successful in IDA have a larger tool bag to draw from," she says. "They have skills and knowledge developed from riding a variety of horses and can react appropriately to the type of horse they are mounted on."

As far as particular rider skills, adaptability is essential and perhaps one of the most important skills for success. Briggs says, "If you are accustomed to riding a lazy horse or a horse who is dull to the aids, and you draw a hotter, tense horse, you need to be able to adjust your aids to suit the needs of the horse."

Moosmueller-Terry emphasizes the

The tests and judging at an IDA show are just like any other dressage show—but the benefits and challenges are found in the catch-riding component. Here, the Otterbein University dressage team celebrates a successful weekend.

development of feel in her young riders. "Some people are born with a natural feel," she says. "Others have to work hard to develop this." Working with a coach or trainer is instrumental in this process. "Feel is about understanding what is going on in the horse's body while you are riding, being able to tell where he feels stiff or tense."

The Warm-Up

"The purpose of catch riding is getting quality movement," Ballou says. In her riders' warm-ups, she places a large emphasis on finding quality gaits. "Many young dressage riders are obsessed with getting the horse on the bit," she says. "But it's often much more effective to start with transitions. Get a sense of how

the horse responds to the leg and don't worry about being on the bit right from the start."

Ballou also suggests using the first 60 seconds of the warm-up to determine how responsive the horse is. Test out the gaits and determine what intensity of the cues is necessary for a 100 percent response, she advises. "Be comfortable experimenting with aids of different strengths," she says.

Both recognizing the necessary intensity of an aid and giving a well-timed aid are essential, Briggs says. "Some horses are dull and will need stronger or louder aids, some horses are sensitive and will need very subtle, quiet aids, and it is the rider's job to recognize the type of horse she is riding and adapt appropriately."

Mental Preparation for Catch Riding

By Jenny Susser, PhD

The art of the catch ride is being able to process multiple pieces of information at the same time and keep your wits about you in order to be effective. This skill set is one that can be developed by anyone, but the key is figuring out how to practice and prepare.

Simulating a catch-riding scenario at home during training is important, but can be challenging. Visualization of a successful ride is also a tool I would use extensively to prepare for these situations. The biggest mental mistake in this type of situation is losing focus or becoming hyperfocused. It is important as a rider, especially a catch rider, to be aware of circumstances that can create problems or dangerous situations, however being hyperfocused on these circumstances can sap your energy and decrease your focus on the end goal. Balancing your focus between the task at hand and the preparation you have already done is powerful. You need to be able to rely on your preparation, referring to it as you choose your next move, while still keeping the end goal in mind to help you figure out the path there. Focus is a muscle, so build more muscle! Most athletes and competitors miss great opportunities daily to practice flexing and building their focus muscle.

Create a plan for your rides—it is fun to hang out and chat while riding, especially during warm-up and cool-down, but for a catch rider, the warm-up is the most crucial part. Even during your everyday training, use the warm-up time to focus, evaluate the horse and decide what tools you need to successfully impact your ride. A great question to ask yourself over and over as you are developing this muscle is, *What am I focusing on now?* This will anchor you in the exercise and make that muscle strong. For riders who may become anxious or fearful before heading into the ring, breathing is your most powerful tool. It sounds so simple that we often dismiss the impact that deep breathing can have on performance. When we become anxious, our bodies become infused with blood and energy because it triggers our fight-or-flight mechanism, preparing us for survival. Our brains actually lose blood flow, thus dramatically reducing our cognitive capacity. When we worry excessively, we lose our ability to think our way out of a situation and, like a horse, we end up reacting instead of responding. Making great decisions requires great mental acuity and breathing is the fastest and easiest way to restore our brain to full function.

Although IDA riding may depart slightly from traditional dressage in format, Moosmueller-Terry maintains focus by relying on the training scale during her riders' warm-ups. She says she looks for rhythm and relaxation first and then builds upward from there. "If the horse is tense, part of our warm-up will be working on stretching to relax and get the horse more through the back. If the connection is lacking, we might do some more transitions or some lateral work."

Finally, Moosmueller-Terry says it is worth remembering that each warm-up is different since a rider has only 10 minutes. "You have to decide where your time will be most wisely spent," she says. "If you see an issue in your horse, your warm-up may be working to see how you will ride that horse to maximize quality and find harmony. You are not going to train a horse in 10 minutes, so you need to establish a working relationship. You might help a horse to relax or help improve transition quality, but ultimately, you are looking to develop a mutual understanding and develop a ride that the horse will be happy to perform for you."

Riding the Test

After the 10-minute warm-up is complete, the rider is led into the arena for the official test. Because riders don't have enough time to truly learn the horse, Moosmueller-Terry says it can be challenging to head into the ring while still learning. But she always advises her riders: "If you discover something during the test, act on it and make the second half of the test better."

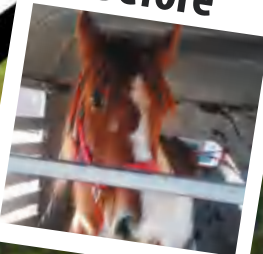
Generally, Moosmueller-Terry tells her riders to focus on elements of the test that are in their control—especially if they run into any challenges with an unwilling horse. "Ride what you can control," she says. Focus on accuracy of the geometry, steady contact and correct rider position. There will always be variables with riding, but by focusing on what is controllable, the end result can almost always be improved.

Sometimes horses enter the arena and become completely different than what they were in the warm-up. "This is especially difficult for me as a coach because I can no longer help," says Moosmueller-Terry. She simply says that by then she hopes the rider has developed a strong enough foundation to approach the challenges without a trainer's assistance.

Perhaps the most important aspect of being in the ring is mental focus and preparation (see sidebar at left, "Mental Preparation for Catch Riding"). Ballou



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IDA offers a unique aspect of dressage that is not often found in the traditional show system: team spirit. The camaraderie of IDA is one of the many reasons that riders love the unique program.

says, "A rider has no time to get flaky or talk to her friends on the sideline. Being in the zone is essential." Briggs agrees: "All riding requires a mental component. IDA adds a whole new dimension, but it's important to remember that riding is about the partnership between horse and rider. The brief warm-up time limits one's ability to build that partnership. Therefore, it's important to keep an open mind."

Staying positive and present is important as well, says Briggs. "Riders often struggle in IDA with the fact that a 10-minute warm-up is not long enough to change anything. Frustration will lead to

a poor ride and instead, riders need to find alternative ways to deal with the problem." Briggs stresses the benefits of drawing from past riding experiences in order to connect better to an unfamiliar horse. "By building on what's familiar, you're going to be a step ahead of your competitors."

A Judge's Perspective

Sarah Geikie, an FEI-level judge based in Connecticut, has judged IDA Nationals three times. When asked about the differences in judging FEI shows in comparison to IDA shows, Geikie says, that like all judges, she uses the universal scale of training to evaluate the horse and rider. "Each time, I am extremely impressed with the quality of the riders," she says. "I judge the IDA riders to the same standard as riders in any other show."

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Geikie also notes that just because the format of IDA shows is challenging doesn't mean that the tests are mediocre. "I have had riders perform 70 percent tests that would win in open competition." In fact, she credits IDA riders for riding clean and accurate tests. "They do not throw any points away for sloppy, inaccurate riding," she says. "Many open riders could learn from IDA riders in the art of accuracy."

As for any tips to ensure a quality test, Geikie recommends riding as accurately as possible with correct figures, using the corners and riding quality transitions. Performing these aspects of a test will result in better scores overall. The biggest challenge Geikie sees is that some riders are conservative or hesitant in the show ring. "I feel the biggest issue is for riders to really go for it," she says.

Other Opportunities

For college students who attend schools without an IDA team but still have an interest, Briggs encourages them to start one. "You won't be disappointed," she says. "The camaraderie among the riders and the opportunities these students receive is second to none. There is no need to put your riding goals on hold. Experience IDA."

For noncollege riders who want the opportunity to ride and show different horses, Briggs recommends reaching out to local boarding stables for additional riding opportunities or even working-student positions. Many owners may have a horse who needs extra exercise a few times a week, and some riders may be able to work out a part-time lease.

The future of IDA and collegiate

riding is certainly expanding and thriving. Beukema says that the organization is adding dressage-seat equitation classes for the 2015–2016 show season. This is especially beneficial for schools that don't have horses capable of upper-level movements in addition to allowing more riders from large teams to compete.

For many riders, IDA serves as a great opportunity to jump in and explore the world of dressage. And for continuing dressage enthusiasts, the association is a challenge but also an incredibly enjoyable way to spend a weekend. Many riders agree that the atmosphere and energy of riding for IDA are special. The catch-riding component and the feeling of team spirit set apart this show system from other standard dressage competitions. 🏆



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A Different Look at Dressage

Driven dressage provides another way to explore our sport.

By Debbie Heitz Wolf

I do not ride dressage except for the half-dozen walk–trot tests that I did years ago. This makes riding for me seldom, at best. What I do, instead, is driven dressage. My riding friends have often questioned how driven dressage works. When I explain it, I say that it is almost just like riding dressage but there are a few differences. Of course, the logistical difference is that the arena size is much larger to allow for four-in-hand competitors. And the movements are performed when the horse's nose, instead of the rider's knee, hits the letter. And, yes, some of the tests even include canter movements. Our tests also require lengthening, collecting and bending, just like traditional dressage tests.

I especially love to compete, and in 2000, I bought a miniature horse, named Spencer, when he was 9 months old. There are plenty of avenues to compete with minis, but my goal was to drive him.

I always start my horses' training with ground driving, even in preparation for riding. I do this as soon as they are weaned. They learn to accept the bit, turn and respond to voice commands for walk, trot and whoa. As Spencer grew older and more experienced, I added the weight of a tire for him to drag. Then, he eventually pulled a cart and was competing. The first show we entered was 4-H level. There were seven participants in the class and they were all sizes. Spencer, who is 34 inches at the withers, was standing next to what seemed like a giant, a Haflinger, during the lineup. The first class was just a pleasure class where, as a group, the horses walk and trot in both directions. Our second class was a cones course. This is a set number of pairs of cones with balls on top. Like a jumper course, they are numbered and the goal is to get through the course with the fastest time. If you hit the cone, the ball falls off and penalty points are incurred. I think I was hooked that day.


I joined the Garden State Horse and Carriage Society in New Jersey shortly after that and started going to its shows, which included dressage. In dressage, I have

always liked the fact that you get your test back and you can see remarks from the judge. After my first driven dressage test, I read the remarks and saw that I did this wrong and that wrong. I made many mistakes and I did that for many tests. But somewhere along the line, I learned the nuances of the different movements. So now as I am driving my test, I am saying to myself *I just did this wrong. I just did that*

wrong. Perhaps ridden dressage riders can relate.

Driven dressage also has levels: Training, Preliminary, Intermediate and Advanced. The last is world-class competition level. Each level asks for more from your horse. Training Level is the only level where cantering is not required or permitted.

I love dressage. I love learning the finesse and more refined movements for my horse. I love getting the tests back and seeing that what I have worked on has improved and also where I still need help. I am a member of Brandywine Valley Driving Club, where I have had the opportunity to take a few clinics with international-level carriage driver Lisa Singer and international combined driving competitor and Grand Prix dressage rider Sara Schmitt. Other than that, I was self-taught. In 2010, I went to the World Equestrian Games in Kentucky and watched the driven dressage for two days. I take every opportunity to learn. Just seeing these world-class drivers was an experience I will never forget. What an eye-opener that was—to have a visual of what it is I am supposed to aim for in my driving. Now I have started to train with Lynn Stokking from Lighted Way Equestrian Program in Bridgton, New Jersey. Lynn has been a dressage trainer for riders for years. However, the same things she teaches riders are the same things that drivers need. With her help, the remarks on my tests no longer say “counter bent.” I am learning how to use my core and half halts to shift my horse's weight onto his hindquarters. And the best part is that, since I am being trained and not just sending my horse for training, everything I learn I can use on multiple horses.

I wish all dressage riders well. Just remember, in the future, if you are unable to ride for any reason, there is always driving to give you that same fix for your competition or dressage needs. 



Courtesy, Debbie Heitz Wolf

Tests in driven dressage call for the same movements as in ridden dressage, such as lengthening, collecting and bending.

A woman wearing a black helmet, a black short-sleeved shirt, and tan breeches stands next to a brown horse. She is holding the horse's lead rope. The horse has white wraps on its lower legs. They are in an outdoor setting with a dirt path and a grassy field in the background.

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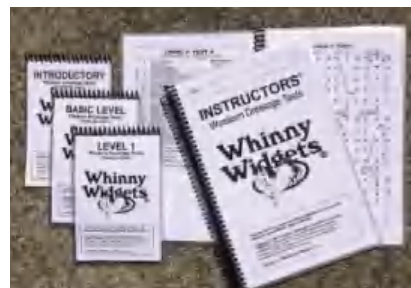
The Spanish Riding School (SRS) in Vienna recently celebrated its 450th anniversary in 2015, and this commemorative book, written by Elisabeth Gurtler, honors the unique history of the establishment. The 208-page book includes more than 100 color photos telling the story of the SRS and depicts moments of everything from Lipizzan foals with their mothers to performances of the *haute école* movements. The book retails for \$65. Visit www.equinenetworkstore.com

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Can Wide Horses Cause Hip Pain?

Q My hips have started bothering me now that I ride every day. My horse is an Andalusian mare and is quite wide in her back. Could that be the problem? Are there any specific exercises I could use to make my hips more comfortable while riding? What type of saddle works best for riders with hip problems?

Stacey Williams
St. Petersburg, Florida

BRITTA ANNA PEDERSEN, BHSC, RNZP

You are not alone with this query. Hip pain and tightness are common complaints, seeming to be more prevalent among dressage riders. This is often due to the forces placed on our musculoskeletal system in a seated dressage position. The direct force load from the horse through the rider in dressage is translated through the rider's hips and spine as you are in a constant contact-seated position with a loading point directly over your ischial tuberosity, known as your seat bones. Every time your horse moves, your hips and spine act as a shock absorber and allow you to move freely with the movement of your horse. If your body didn't have this shock-absorbing ability, you would look extremely rigid and move against your horse's movement pattern.

It is difficult to give you specific advice without knowing more about your injury and pain and knowing further subjective details on the type of symptoms you are experiencing. The following information is to be used as a guide only and not a diagnosis. They are suggestions on exercises that may be beneficial for you. I strongly suggest that you seek the advice of your physical therapist so she can diagnose your pain accurately and prescribe specific exercises related to you.

You mention your horse is an Andalusian mare and is quite wide through her back. The wider a horse is in the back, the more supple you need to be through your hips, allowing for a greater range of hip abduction (opening). For example, think about sitting straddled over a narrow barrel and then sitting over a wider barrel: On the wider barrel you need to be able to open your hips without cheating and just turning your knees outward. As soon as you turn your knees outward (common on a wider horse), it externally rotates the femur (upper thigh bone), forcing you onto the back of your seat bones for support and balance, which increases the force load through your hips and spine.

So how can you work on hip mobility? I advise all of my riders to run through a quick set of stretches before each ride as well as a more extensive stretch routine at home or in the



© hamara

Hip pain and tightness are common complaints, seeming to be more prevalent among dressage riders.

gym. The main hip stretches to focus on before your ride would be your adductors (inner thigh). A good, quick stretch for this muscle group is to put your foot on top of a mounting block or on a low rail. Make sure that your knee is fully extended and your foot is facing the same direction as your hips. Slowly lunge at a 45-degree angle over your standing leg. You should feel a good stretch down the inside of your inner thigh. This should not be painful, but more of a gentle pulling/stretching feeling. Hold all stretches for approximately 30 seconds and repeat on both sides. As your flexibility increases, you can put



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Britta Anna Pedersen, BHSc, RNZP,

is an FEI-level dressage rider as well as a certified New Zealand physical therapist, Bosu trainer and founder of Equipoise, a physical-therapy and performance training business specializing in working with equestrian athletes. She has more than a decade of clinical experience and has worked extensively with a wide variety of athletes. She is based in Southern California (equipoisephysio.com).

your foot on something slightly higher to increase your range and stretch.

The other important structures to stretch for hip mobility are your quadriceps and hip flexors. You can target these together by standing next to a rail and facing away from it. Bring your toe up behind you and place it on the rail (the rail should be approximately the height of the bottom of your buttock). Stagger your standing leg slightly forward and in line with its hip joint. Then, while drawing your belly button in toward your spine and keeping your hips in a slight posterior rotation, slowly lunge downward on your stance leg. Make sure you hold on to the railing behind you with both hands for stability. You should feel a good stretch over the front of your hip and down the front of your thigh.

The last stretch that is important for hip mobility in riders targets your gluteals. The gluteals are the largest muscle group in the human body. You can do a simple stretch for them at the barn. Sit on the edge of a chair and place your foot on top of your opposite knee. Place one hand gently on your floating knee to stop it from coming upward and slowly bend your torso forward. Aim to reach for the ground with your free hand, just to the

outside of your fixed ankle.

One common issue that I see in riders is weak postural stabilizers. The postural stabilizers around the hips and lower back act as a corset, supporting your spine. If your postural-stabilizing muscles are not strong enough to support your skeletal system under the load-bearing activity of riding, your pelvis and spine end up taking the entire shearing-force load. Over time, this can lead to wear and tear on your joints and can cause pain. As riders it is incredibly important to make sure we maintain strong core muscles, which will protect our spine and keep us pain free both in and out of the saddle. Your physical therapist, Pilates instructor or personal trainer can teach you the firing patterns of these muscle groups and help you progress with exercises as you get stronger.

As for equipment, I suggest that you sit in as many saddles as possible. Each rider is built differently so what suits one person may not suit another. Ask your coach to watch you ride in each saddle you want to try and give you feedback as to how he feels your position looks in each saddle. Your saddle is not only important for the horse, but it is also extremely important that it fits you. A narrow twist, for example, suits riders with a smaller pelvis. You need to feel comfortable in your saddle. It should not be causing you pain as you spend great lengths of time in it every day. Anatomically, a woman's seat bones are generally farther apart when compared to those of a male, as a woman's pelvis is often shallower and wider. When you are sitting in your saddle, you want your seat bones to sit flat against the seat and not be angled downward over the edge of the seat. Your saddle fitter and coach will be able to guide you best with this. The best advice I can give you is to sit in as many saddles as you can. It's like trying to find that perfect pair of shoes!

Which Exercises Can I Ride in a Small Arena?



Our riding arena is small, and sometimes I am confined to riding on a 20-meter circle. What are good exercises to practice in such a small space? My horse and I are schooling Second and Third Level.

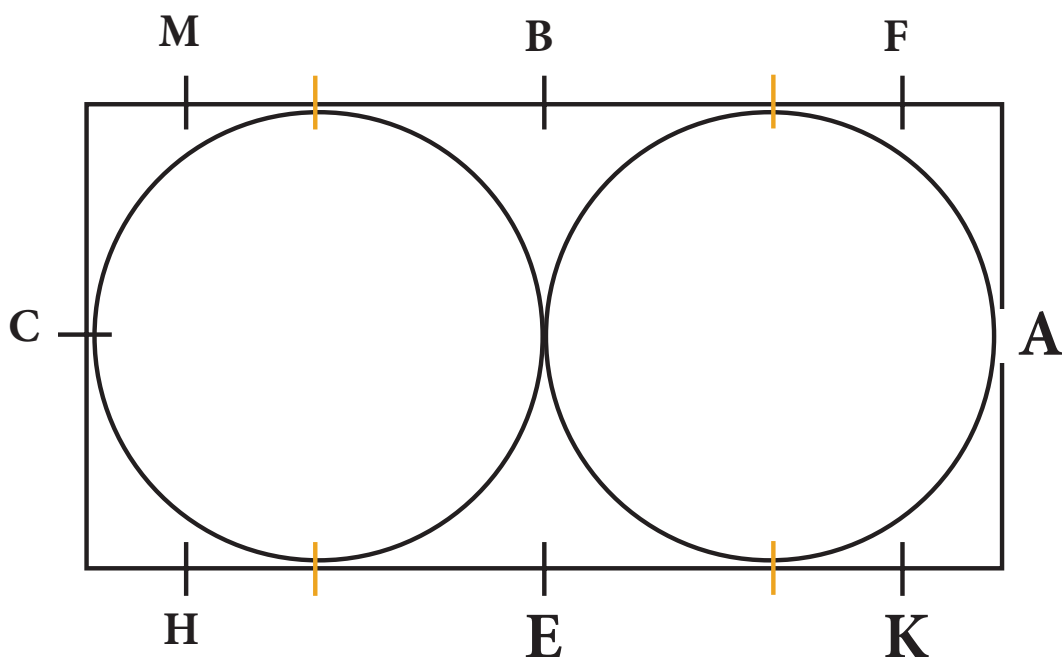
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JENNIFER WILLIAMS

When I first started riding and training, I often had to work in areas the size of a 20-meter circle due to footing issues in certain parts of the arena. There are some good exercises you can use to develop adjustability and elasticity in your horse

even in a smaller space. The following are some exercises I find helpful at most any stage in your horse's training, but especially when he is beginning to pursue a higher degree of collection in Second to Third Levels. I have included three exercises I use on a regular basis.

When working and riding my horses, I am always looking to make them more responsive and more elastic, but most of all, more adjustable. The first exercise I employ for developing the adjustability is trot-canter transitions. Ask for a specific number of trot and canter strides on a



Exercises ridden on a 20-meter circle can develop adjustability and elasticity in your horse.

Small dressage arena 20 m x 40 m

20-meter circle. Try riding eight canter strides followed by eight trot strides throughout the circle, repeating that sequence until you are able to just think about the transition in order to execute it. You would be amazed at how aware you become with the slightest delay in the responsiveness your horse offers.

One of the problems you might encounter is that your horse is delayed with the downward transition. You may have to start the process for that transition to trot on stride number four to execute it in time by stride number eight, and so on. You can then play with the number of strides to increase or decrease your horse's attentiveness. Instead of eight strides in between the transition, change it to six or even four strides. By reducing the number of strides in between transitions on duller horses, you are able to quicken their response time.

If your horse is hot and takes over at the thought of a new transition, he may benefit from a higher number of strides in

between transitions: say 15 trot, 15 canter, 15 trot strides until you decide he is respectful and waiting for your next request. This also helps your horse to be able to relax in between each transition. The objective is to figure out what stride count works for you in order to get in tune with the timing of your aids. You should feel that your horse is being honest with the timing and that you are not working harder to execute the aids effectively.

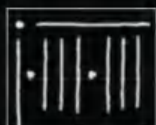
The second exercise I recommend to improve the adjustability of your horse is tempo changes. This builds on the transition exercise and can be done on a 20-meter circle as well. Develop a big, forward canter in those first eight strides. Make sure your horse is really pushing from behind and offering a response that feels forward and attentive to the leg. When that is achieved, follow it up by developing eight collected strides of canter until your horse is transferring weight back onto his hind legs and compressing his body.

repeat until your horse is truly sitting, compressing and soft in your hand. Then you can move him more quickly forward and check the response again from your leg, keeping him forward for the next eight strides.

When asking for tempo changes in the trot, ride a medium trot for eight steps, then try to collect your horse by incorporating a shoulder-in for eight steps rather than just pulling the horse back into a more shortened step or frame. Here you work to keep the rhythm of the trot in place while incorporating the shoulder-in, all while helping your horse transfer his weight back and more underneath his body.

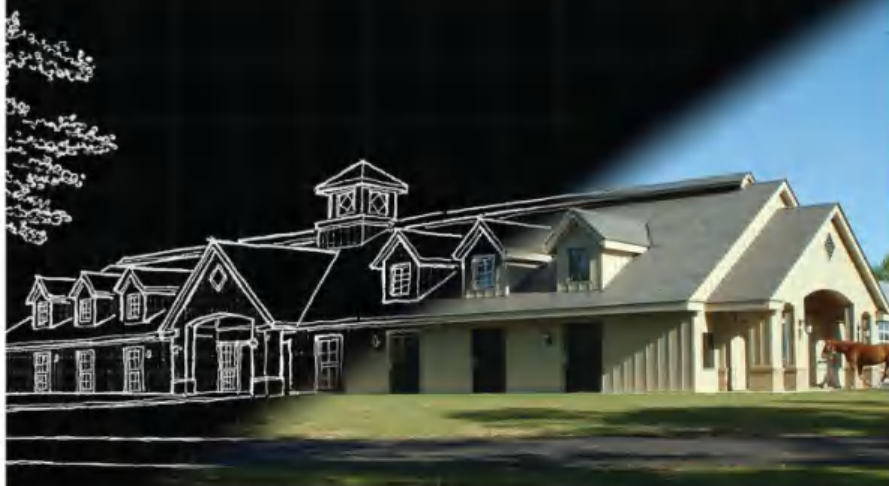
What I love about these exercises is they can be ridden for as long as needed on the circle until you are satisfied with the result. Continue with the exercise until you feel you are able to clearly count the number of strides of either a more collected gait or a more powerful, forward gait.

Ask yourself if you are able to get true collection happening within the first two strides of your collected eight strides. This might not happen right away. It is likely to take the entire eight-stride portion to obtain your goal of truly transferring the weight back to the horse's hind legs. You also want to feel that your horse compresses and lightens in the hand simultaneously. As he becomes more aware of your body language, he will begin to respond within a shorter amount of time. Continue to



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Q&A



Mary Cornelius

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is a USDF gold medalist and has competed at the CDI Grand Prix level. Her current mount, HS Wrevolution, is competing at the Intermediate level and schooling Grand Prix. Along with her team, she runs Summervale Premier Dressage, a training and sales operation in Roy, Washington (summervalepremier-dressage.com).

The last exercise I enjoy when working in a smaller space is to create a simple square. This can be executed at walk, trot and canter, and it is always surprising to students how difficult it is to create four straight sides. Not only do I try to emphasize the straightness on each of my four sides, but also try to execute a very crisp corner. In the beginning, I tell myself I must complete my turn from one straight line to the next straight line within three or four strides. Then, by the end, I want to be able to touch the outside rein

maintaining my inside-leg connection and be able to execute a simple, crisp turn within two strides before going onto my next straight line.

Give these exercises a try. They give you some real homework on helping your horse become more adjustable, supple and responsive. They can be a bit of fun added to your mundane everyday circle, improve your timing and clarity of the aids all while helping your horse improve his strength and balance as he moves up the levels. 🐾

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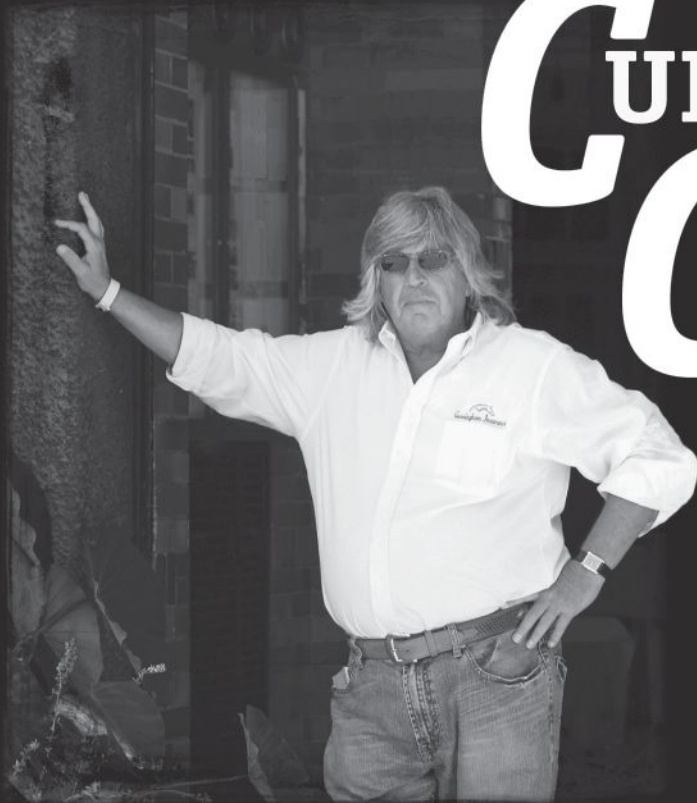
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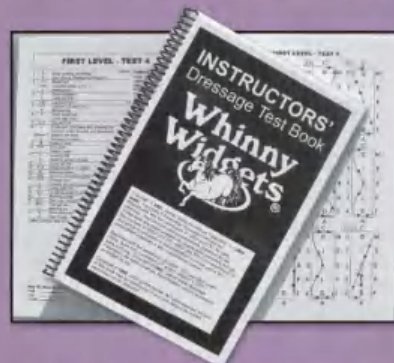
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To prevent your horse from falling out on a circle or turn, practice spiraling him in ...

Imagine that the earth is slowly crumbling on the outside of the circle, and you must keep him inching toward a smaller circle. —Katherine Bateson-Chandler

Katherine Bateson-Chandler is an internationally successful dressage rider and trainer. She trains each summer in Europe with British Olympian Carl Hester. In 2010, she and Nartan represented the U.S. at the Alltech FEI World Equestrian Games in Lexington, Kentucky. Born in Britain, Bateson-Chandler became an American citizen and is based in Wellington, Florida. (kbcdressage.com)



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